ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOLS

EDUCATION REPORT
September 2011 – August 2012

INTRODUCTION
The 2011-2012 school year included a myriad of activities that added to the learning experiences of all our students. As an educational community committed to excellence in all our endeavors, the Acton Public Schools and Acton-Boxborough Regional School District continued to research, develop, and further enhance our curricular and instructional skills and course offerings. With a culture that believes in continuous improvement and in supporting all learners, we are proud of our accomplishments over the past year.

ENROLLMENT
The October 1, 2011 elementary school enrollment decreased by sixty-two students, from 2,563 to 2,501. Of the total number enrolled, 15 were special education students attending “out-of-district” schools – a decrease of three students from the previous October 1. Kindergarten enrollment decreased by 27 students, from 328 to 301. There were no school choice students at the elementary level.

The junior high school enrollment for October 1 increased by six students, from 967 to 973, with eleven school choice students. Sixteen were special education students attending out-of-district schools.

The high school enrollment decreased from 2,034 to 1,995, a difference of 39 students. There were 23 school choice students at the high school – a decrease of 14 students from the previous year. Of the total number enrolled, forty were special education students attending out-of-district schools.

PERSONNEL
Staffing changes for the 2011-12 school year were affected by the June 2011 retirement of three Acton Public and four Acton-Boxborough Regional teachers. Leaves of absence for six APS teachers and three ABRSD teachers were granted, and four APS and nine AB resignations were received. The 12.6 APS and 13.4 ABRSD full-time-equivalent new teachers who were hired filled these vacancies and additional openings. The drop in enrollment at Acton Public Schools allowed the School Committee to reduce a full elementary section (from 16 to 15 classrooms in Kindergarten). This allowed us to reallocate some of those resources to fill a longtime need by hiring a Mathematics Curriculum Specialist. We increased budgetary funding for classroom assistants by $108,000 at the elementary schools to reduce fundraising pressure on the PTOs. At the regional schools, we were able to reallocate resources to add a half-time Reading Specialist/half-time Special Educator to RJGrey and a School Psychologist at ABRHS to increase direct service to students.
CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

“It’s Still All About Instruction: How Do We Know Students Are Learning?” was the theme that pervaded all of our work in the 2011-2012 school year, beginning with the Leadership Institute held during the summer of 2011 and continuing throughout the year in schools and departments. It continued the work begun last year (to articulate learning goals in all disciplines) and started the process of identifying assessment tools to gauge student academic growth. The Long-Range Strategic Plan mission and value statements support this work.

Mission

To prepare all students to attain their full potential as life-long learners, critical thinkers, and productive citizens of our diverse community and global society.

Values

As a community, we value:

• An environment that promotes social development and emotional and physical well-being for the entire school community.
• An excellent academic program that prepares all students to achieve their individual potential.
• Diverse extracurricular opportunities accessible to all students that provide for student growth.
• A community that welcomes and respects the differences among us.
• Literacy, communication, and technology skills for life-long learning.
• Educational policy and resource decisions informed by research and evidence.

Acton Public Schools’ districtwide English Language Arts and Literacy goals and criteria, based on the new Massachusetts English Language Arts and Literacy Framework (which incorporates the Common Core), were established during the grade level meetings. While each school decided on their Benchmark Reading Assessment Tools, districtwide reading benchmarks were established for consistency across the elementary schools. Kindergarten through grade two mathematics goals and criteria and preliminary grades three through six mathematics goals, based on the new Massachusetts Mathematics Framework and PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) documents, were also established during the districtwide grade level meetings. At the region (grades seven through twelve), learning goals and criteria were established, and beginning common assessments were identified through department meetings and early release/late start days. Implementation, feedback, and revisions will continue next year throughout both districts. Academic goals can be found on the district curriculum website: http://ab.mec.edu/curriculum/objectives.shtml

In anticipation of the implementation of the new MA ELA and Literacy Framework, the new MA Mathematics Framework, and the Next Generation Science Standards, and to continue to support the social studies and social/bullying programs at each elementary school, we were able to purchase much needed leveled texts, kits and textbooks. The School Committee generously supported this funding, as well as funding at the region for replacement texts or additional primary and secondary sources.

Collaborative Learning

Strengthening and expanding the knowledge base and capacity for professional collaborative learning teams was another focus for the 2011-2012 school year. Building on last year's Teacher-to-
Teacher Initiative (which provided all educators the opportunity to conduct a peer observation guided by a protocol from the National School of Reform Faculty), we invited two consultants from National School Reform Faculty to conduct protocol training. Protocols, structured ways (procedures and criteria) to work and communicate, promote adult growth and are directly linked to student learning. They promote meaningful and efficient communication, problem solving and learning. Protocols give time for active listening and reflection so that all voices in the group are heard and honored. In the fall of 2011, thirty-two educators and administrators attended a five-day training seminar that resulted in their becoming “certified” to conduct training within our own districts. By the end of this five-day seminar, participating teachers, principals and school leaders left with the understanding and confidence to use protocols and professional readings for engaging staff in reflective conversations about student work, equity and democracy, and teaching practices. Subsequently, protocols have been utilized during faculty and staff meetings, leadership meetings, and department, team and grade level meetings. Summer 2012 training seminars will be held, led by our own certified practitioners.

Professional Learning Program

During the 2011-2012 school year, we also reviewed, assessed, and revisioned our Professional Learning Program. In the summer of 2011, a two-day Professional Learning Summit was held to:

- Analyze the results of the 2010-2011 staff professional learning survey that identified the factors influencing participation, motivation for participation, and preferences for professional learning opportunities.
- Identify the districts’ professional learning values and mission statement.
- Identify categories for professional learning opportunities.
- Propose new structures for the Professional Learning Program.

This work was based on the most current research in adult learning and professional development. Dr. Barry Fishman, Associate Professor of Learning Technologies at the University of Michigan School of Education and a national expert and researcher on teacher learning and the use of technology to support teacher learning, collaborated with us by sharing his knowledge and research and challenging us to think broader and deeper about the quality and type of program we wished to offer in the districts.

Throughout the 2011-2012 school year, the original twenty-two participants of the summit met to articulate the professional learning structures that support the traits of high-performing schools, worked with the Teacher Evaluation Task Force for consistency with these new initiatives, and implemented the following pilot professional learning structures:

- APS Teacher Collaborative Groups
- RJ Grey Lesson Study in mathematics
- ABRHS Seminar Groups
- Districtwide Smart Board Workgroups
- Districtwide Google Workgroups

Additionally, the work of five sub-committees continued throughout the spring:

- Mentoring – Restructured Orientation Day, explored ideas to support new teachers at the building level throughout the year, and developed a second year of the mentoring program (which incorporated the use of protocols).
• Inservice/Graduate Credit Options – Created proposal forms for new categories in the Professional Learning Program: Guided Workshops, Research Practice Seminars, and Graduate Courses.

• In-house Graduate Level Courses – Staff received instruction about creating graduate courses. As a result, nine new graduate courses were created, to be approved by area universities and offered on our campus in 2012-2013.

• Documentation – Created new R&D proposal form. FAQs pertaining to R&Ds, PDPs and Course Reimbursement were created and posted on the Professional Learning site.

• Digital Platform – With promised upgrades to be made by SmartEDU, the committee decided to continue with this platform.

In May/June of 2012, the revisions were shared with all faculty and staff through faculty and/or department meetings.

**Educator Evaluation Task Force**

Building on last year's work with Kim Marshall, an Educator Evaluation Task Force, which was composed of educators and administrators from the elementary, junior high, and senior high schools, worked to understand the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's requirements and to begin to share this information with all faculty and staff. The following five subcommittees were created to refine the pilot so that it can be implemented in the 2012-2013 school year: Reflection and Goal Setting, Classroom Educator Rubrics, Caseload Educator Rubrics, Timeline and Platform, and Contract Language.

**School-Business Partnership**

The following is a sampling of activities:

• Our Business Partnership Projects continued to support grades 3 and 5 to enhance the teaching and learning of “Electricity” and “Simple Engineering.”

• The Acton Water District and the Health Department continued to support and enrich our science and social studies units with classroom visits and field trips.

• At the 6th grade, three of the elementary schools continued partnerships with local banks to help support the teaching of mathematics and financial literacy. Due to time constraints, two schools elected not to participate for this year.

• Job Shadowing – Over 150 high school students visited over thirty business sites to learn about careers and the workplace.

• Career Speakers – Over 500 high school students listened to speakers who shared information about their workplace and career paths for their fields.

• Senior Internship – Fifty students participated in a three-week, thirty-hours per week, "hands-on" experience in a work site during the last three weeks of their senior year. There were 23 new sites or sponsors.

• New Websites – Two new websites were created: Career Exploration and Senior Internship. Each will provide information on job shadowing, career speakers, résumé and other job search documents, and senior internship for students, businesses, and the community.

We continue to expand our School-Business Partnership Programs. Please visit our websites at [http://ab.mec.edu/abrhs](http://ab.mec.edu/abhrs) (listed under Student Resources) for more information.
ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The five elementary schools – Conant, Douglas, Gates, McCarthy-Towne, and Merriam – have the following in common every year.

- Each has a School Council, as required by the Educational Reform Act of 1993.

- Vital parent involvement plays an active role in the life of each school. These parents sponsored numerous assembly programs that enriched their school’s cultural and aesthetic life with musicians, storytellers, and other performers. They raised funds for schoolwide projects; provided volunteers for many in- and out-of-class activities, tasks, and services; staffed the “Safe Arrival” hotlines; and also sponsored school newsletters and other activities.

- A number of whole-school events take place, such as orientation programs for kindergarten parents and children as the school year begins, back-to-school night open houses in the fall, and a Memorial Day program in the spring.

- Students use computers, technology, associated software, and the Internet in various ways: to supplement the writing/composing process, to enrich or extend learning experiences in each curricular area, to strengthen the learning of concepts and practice of skills via the Internet.

- The faculty participates in professional learning through one or more of these activities: pursuit of formal course work, involvement in systemwide curriculum and instruction review and improvement projects, participation in the districtwide Professional Learning Day, and attendance at professional conferences and workshops. In addition, many teachers work with student teachers. Through their actions, every year the faculty shows that they are truly committed to the concept of being life-long learners.

- Each school has a reception or event to celebrate and honor the parents and volunteers who assist them during the school year.

In 2011-12, the Elementary Schools...

- Developed new grade-specific Learning Goals and Criteria in order to implement the revised MA Curriculum Frameworks in English Language Arts and Mathematics (the “Common Core” editions).

- Expanded math and reading assessments in order to better understand and support the individual learning needs of students.

- Reviewed the National Conceptual Framework for Science Education with every grade level in order to begin preparations for implementing upcoming changes to the Science curriculum (NRC, July 2011 – the foundation for the Next Generation Science Standards, due out in 2013).

- Continued partnerships/school visits/field trips with local businesses in support of science education through our School Business Partnership Program.

- Walked across South America! Since 2009, the Acton (and Boxborough) schools have participated in a national program from the National Geographic Society. Following previous years’ “visits” to Africa and Asia, 2012 brought us the traveling map of South America. The giant map (26’ x 35”) visited all six elementary schools in April/May for three weeks of student explorations. This continues to be an amazing opportunity.

... Partnered with Parent Involvement Project (PIP) Programs

The Acton-Boxborough PIP organization continued to offer high-quality science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) learning experiences for Acton and Boxborough families. An AB PIP STEM event is curriculum-centered and “hands-on”; activities happen outside of the school day and include parents and students as partners and participants in the activities.
• A major PIP event, *Discover STEM* (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), is a “reverse science fair” that takes place every other year. It is a showcase of engineers, scientists, technology professionals, and AB students who specialize in engineering, robotics, green energy and banking technology. Exhibitors are paired with ABRHS students who act as “explainers” and activity facilitators. The fall 2011 event was a great success with hundreds of visitors and dozens of exhibitors.

• Other annual PIP events included the Acton and Boxborough 4th-grade Star Party, 3rd- and 5th-grade Market Math events at Roche Brothers, and Family Domino/Games Night. AB PIP continues to promote the “Acton, Naturally” nature guide, co-developed by the Acton Schools and the Town of Acton. These custom guides are available at the HS bookstore or at EMS.

**...Partnered with The Discovery Museums**

In return for the use of space at the Administrative Building as a distribution center for the Museums’ *Traveling Science Workshop* Program, the Discovery Museums continued to offer a series of three free outreach programs. Each of our five elementary schools has taken advantage of these *Traveling Science Workshops*.

**ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOLS**

**R. J. Grey Junior High School**

R. J. Grey began the 2011-2012 school year with 955 students: 467 in the seventh grade and 488 in the eighth, based on October 1 data. This was an increase of two students from the enrollment of October 1, 2010. As school began, the administrative team (Principal Craig Hardimon, Assistant Principal Allison Warren, and Assistant Principal Andrew Shen) welcomed new seventh graders and returning eighth graders to R. J. Grey.

To ensure a positive transition to the start of the school year for both seventh and eighth graders, an “Opening Days of School” feedback form was distributed on Parents’ Night. The survey results were overwhelmingly positive: students felt comfortable and supported, and parents felt included and well informed. It was an outstanding start to the school year.

Teaming is the fundamental core of RJG. The team model enables staff to create a strong web of support to enhance student success. A large school becomes a smaller school. With consistent communication among team teachers, issues are addressed early and students have an opportunity to develop close relationships with their teachers, as well as with a familiar peer group. Moreover, teaming is the ideal format through which we can deliver those programs and values we most believe in, as expressed in our Statement of Purpose: meeting the needs of the young adolescent, maintaining curricular quality and interdisciplinary opportunities, creating a sense of community, and promoting citizenship.

During the 2011-2012 school year, seventh- and eighth-grade students were distributed among four “full” teams at each grade level. Each full seventh-grade team had approximately 112 students supported by five core academic teachers (English, Social Studies, Math, Science, and Spanish and/or French). In addition, grade seven also had a half team, with approximately fifty students and three teachers (English/Social Studies, Math/Science, and World Language). The addition of the half team provided additional structure and supports for the district’s highly specialized and successful Connections program, reduced overall seventh-grade team sizes, enhanced communication between core curricular teachers, and increased home/school communication.
In grade eight, each team averaged 118 students and five core academic teachers (Math, Science, English, Social Studies, and Spanish and/or French). On an ongoing basis, teachers planned integrated curricular activities that helped students see the relationships between various subjects.

It is important to note that all teams provide the same level of academic rigor and social opportunities. Similar supports and resources are provided as well. Specifically, all students participate in English, Social Studies, Math, Science, and Physical Education/Health. The curriculum demonstrates the core values of reading (the English program is literature-based), writing (although skills are primarily taught in English classes, the other academic subjects have adopted the “Writing Across the Curriculum” approach, which provides students with a more consistent writing approach), math (with the added skill development of reading mathematical language), and our physical (Science) and cultural (Social Studies) world. Most of our students also take a world language, with twice as many taking Spanish as French. Seventh graders participate in an “exploratory program” that consists of Study Skills, Art, Music, and Minuteman Technology Lab I, each of which meets every other day for half the year. Exploratory courses for the eighth graders include Art, Minuteman Technology Lab II, Life Skills/Health, Drama, and Computer Literacy; these classes last for one-fifth of the year. In addition to the core curriculum, students elect to participate in band, chorus or “grey-block,” a combination of curriculum-related mini-courses and structured study halls with team teachers.

In October 2011, R. J. Grey (as well as the high school and elementary schools) received the results of the state-mandated MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) tests from the previous spring. We continue to be proud that our students’ scores compared favorably with the top-performing schools in the state. This is a result of the high quality of teachers and teaching, an excellent curriculum, fine students, and the supportive families who make education a priority for their children.

For many students, learning and connecting with members of the R. J. Grey community took place through our extracurricular programs. The interscholastic athletic program included teams in cross-country, soccer, field hockey, basketball, softball, track, and baseball. All participants on these teams paid an activity fee that helped to support these programs. The intramural program was available to all students, meeting either before or after school. These intramurals included basketball, lacrosse, and strength training. Other after-school activities included the Ski Club, Adopt-a-Grandparent, Jazz Band, Speech and Debate Team, Chess/Board Games Club, Math Counts, and the Yearbook. The school musical, “Guys and Dolls,” involved over 150 students and 200 parents. We continued the tradition of the Rotunda Project, where each student created a small, self-representative piece of art. These individual drawings were then hung in the rotunda area on three-dimensional displays painted the color of each team.

Special events during the school year included Halloween Dress-Up Day, the Thanksgiving Assembly, Blue and Gold Day (school spirit day), a weekend day ski trip to Waterville Valley, a staff vs. student basketball challenge, the end-of-year seventh-grade trip to Kimball’s and eighth-grade day at Canobie Lake Park, and the Student Recognition Assembly. A new feature in the 2011-12 school year was “Pizza with the Principal.” R. J. Grey teachers nominated students who demonstrated responsible citizenship throughout the year. These students were treated to a pizza lunch with Principal Hardimon.

Through the involvement of the Student Council, students connect with each other in a number of ways. This group helped to plan schoolwide activities, dances, and service learning projects. In addition to our annual community service learning projects, such as the Coat Drive, where hundreds of coats were collected and distributed to families in need, or our involvement in
collecting holiday Toys for Tots, our students led a schoolwide sneaker drive. Over 200 pairs of gently used sneakers for men, women and children were donated to local area shelters and thrift shops. Additionally, the students from 8 Green spent a day in the fall volunteering their time to clean up recreational areas in Acton and Boxborough.

Our continued commitment to the partnership between school and home, daily emails, monthly articles and “drop in hours,” and weekly communication from the principal promoted continuity and educational support to families. Additionally, RJG professional staff offered parent forums to parents and guardians on adolescent development, homework, school discipline, and stress management. These were extremely well received. Of particular note was the number of sixth-grade parents who attended these discussion forums as part of their children’s transition to the junior high school. The School Council, consisting of four parents, one community person-at-large, two staff members, and the principal, also addressed a wide variety of relevant issues and made recommendations to the administration that were very helpful. The School Council continued to have a strong voice in the development of the school and the overall school climate. An active P.T.S.O. organization (for families in grades seven through twelve) planned, organized, and assisted with many events at R. J. Grey. Parents/guardians were invited to attend monthly noontime informational meetings with both the RJG and ABRHS principals, who presented reports and answered questions. The P.T.S.O. also sponsored evening programs designed to provide information about the schools.

Another R. J. Grey highlight was our annual Project Wellness Day. Project Wellness is a daylong conference for seventh-grade students and a parent or guardian, designed to empower parents and teenagers in addressing the variety of issues faced by today’s families and to develop, maintain, or improve adult-teenager open communication. This event brought seventh-grade students and adult family members together at Merrimack College on March 21, 2012 to learn about ways to communicate with each other about difficult issues and sensitive topics, ranging from time management to nutrition to navigating relationships. Approximately 850 students, family members, and staff participated in this event.

Over the course of the school year, R. J. Grey staff continued with initiatives that promoted learning, mutual respect, and opportunities for professional growth. In response to parent, staff, and student feedback, building-based professional development opportunities focused on addressing and responding to incidents of bullying, teasing, and harassment for both staff and students, including but not limited to promoting respect for self and others, becoming a more active bystander, and ensuring concurrent responses for both victims and aggressors. On a schoolwide level, R. J. Grey implemented a bullying prevention curriculum, Second Step, for all 7th- and 8th-grade students. The program paired teachers with groups of students to teach mini-lessons on bullying, empathy, communication, and other related items.

At the end of the 2011-2012 school year, three veteran staff members, Lisa Beddoe, Geraldine Atkins, and Elaine Livermore, retired after many years of service to our school. These professionals devoted decades to our school community and touched the lives of several hundred students and families. We thank them for their many years of leadership, support, and dedication to the students of R. J. Grey Junior High.

A change in leadership also occurred at the end of June 2012: Principal Craig Hardimon departed R. J. Grey to pursue a high school principal position in another district. A comprehensive search process was conducted for a new principal, resulting in Assistant Principal Andrew Shen taking on the role of Principal in July 2012.
Acton-Boxborough Regional High School

Post Secondary Education: The ABRHS Class of 2012 was comprised of 459 students; of these, 92% enrolled at four-year schools, while 3% continued their education at two-year colleges, prep and technical schools.

Standardized Test Results: Average SAT scores for the 2012 senior class again exceeded those of state and national populations. An increase from 93% to 95% of seniors took the SATs, well above the state average of 89%. Our average combined score for the SAT was 1912, up 37 points from last year’s seniors and 414 points higher than the average combined Massachusetts score of 1498.

National Merit Scholarship Competition: Twenty-five members of the Class of 2012 achieved semi-finalist recognition; sixty others received letters of commendation.

National Honor Society: One hundred seven members of the Class of 2013 were inducted into the NHS in April 2012.

National Latin Exam: National Latin Exam results: 43 Gold (Summa cum laude); seven Silver (Maxima cum laude); seven Bronze (Magna cum laude); four cum laude; two perfect scores (one in Latin II and one in Latin III).

Academic Decathlon Team: During the 2011-2012 season, the team of nine regulars and eleven alternates won the Massachusetts State Championship for the 20th time in the past 21 years. A total of 45 Massachusetts high schools competed. In addition, the team placed 9th overall in the country at the USAD National Championship.

Mathematics Team and Competitive Activities: In the 2011-2012 season, the AB math team finished second in the monthly competition in the Massachusetts Mathematics League. The team continued on to the state competition run by the Massachusetts Association of Mathematics Leagues in April 2012 and placed second among large schools in Massachusetts. They then competed in the New England Association of Mathematics Leagues Competition in May 2012 and placed third among large schools in New England.

In addition to the team competition, twelve students were finalists in the Massachusetts Mathematics Olympiad exam – Xiaoyu He, Nihal Gowravaram, Alan Chiao, Martin Ma, David Fink, Sinan Zhang, Sam Yuan, Shinya Hirata, Larry Chen, Tom Larkin, Roy Li and Chirantan Neogy. In the National AMC, fifteen students placed in the top 10% nationwide, and four of these – Xiaoyu He, Alan Chiao, David Fink and 8th grader Niket Gowravaran – advanced to the 3rd level of this competition: the USAMO (United States of America Mathematics Olympiad).

Speech and Debate: The team, composed of over fifty students from grades 9-12, competed in twelve regional tournaments and one national tournament hosted by Harvard University. Students participated in a variety of events: Public Forum and Lincoln-Douglas Debate; Student Congress; Play, Prose and Poetry Reading; Dramatic and Humorous Interpretation; Impromptu and Extemporaneous Speaking. Competing in the Massachusetts Forensics League and the Massachusetts Catholic Forensics League, the team was matched against schools across the state and consistently placed in the medal rounds. The team’s top competitors also competed at Harvard University’s Speech and Debate Invitational, the National Forensics League National Qualifying Tournament, and the Catholic Forensics League National Tournament. Last year, five of our students were chosen to represent our state at nationals.
**Education Report for 2011-2012**

**Athletics:** During the 2011-12 school year, participation in athletics remained consistent, with over 1,800 students in grades 7-12 taking part. League Championships were won by boys’ cross country, girls’ cross-country, field hockey, boys’ basketball, girls’ ice hockey, boys’ indoor track, boys’ lacrosse, softball, girls’ tennis, boys’ tennis, girls’ spring track, and boys’ spring track.

In the fall season, field hockey was a North divisional finalist. In the winter, boys’ indoor track won the Division 1 State Championship, and the boys’ 4 x 800 relay team won the All State Championship; the boys also captured the 4 x 400 relay Division 1 State Championship. James Sullivan was crowned 1 mile State Champion, and Maya Jarostchuk captured the 300-meter State Championship. The girls’ gymnastics team was also awarded the MIAA Sportsmanship Award. In the spring, girls’ tennis won the Division 1 State Championship; boys’ track won the state’s MSTCA Division 1 Championship; the boys’ 4x400 relay team (Abacherli, Usoff, Doelp and Summers) won a state championship; Maya Jarostchuk won her second individual track championship in the 400 meter; and the softball team was a Division 1 North finalist.

Individual accomplishments: Peter Trombly was recognized as Academic All-American in lacrosse, Kyle Soroka and Tyler McKelvie were awarded All-American honors in lacrosse, and Kevin LaFrancis scored the 1,000th point of his basketball career. AB athletes were further recognized with 17 All Scholastic honors.

**Proscenium Circus:** This student drama group at the high school functions as a teaching and working theater. In addition to offering outstanding professional instruction in technical theater, acting, movement, scenic design, scenic painting, voice, directing, dance, costume design, hair and makeup, stage management, set construction, lighting and sound, "PC" produced 22 outstanding award-winning shows throughout the year. The productions for the 2011-2012 year included the fall play, "Robin Hood," the musical, "Pippin," and the spring play, "Romeo and Juliet." The Massachusetts Educational Theater Guild Competition entry, "Fuenteovejuna," was a State Finalist.

David Nicholson, AB sophomore, was awarded the Massachusetts Spotlight Award from North Shore Music Theater for his performance in "Pippin." David competed in New York City with sixty other students from across the country for the National Theater Award. Rounding out the year were the competitive class plays and the two-night Festival of 10 Minute Plays.

Ten AB Playwrights participated in the Boston College "Playwright's Forum," in which professional actors and directors read or produced their plays at a professional theater in Boston.

**Peer Leadership Program:** Peer Leadership had another very successful year. Peer leaders facilitated alcohol/drug awareness programs in Acton's elementary schools. They also assisted in a smoking cessation program, accompanied middle school students to Project Wellness, and continued to work toward expanding peer leadership into Blanchard Elementary School in Boxborough. The student board is experienced and confident, and Peer Leadership has a strong cohort of students who actively support substance-free living.

**The School Newspaper:** *The Spectrum,* published five times during the school year, includes articles and photography of interest to the ABRHS community. Its staff of approximately forty students complete all tasks involved in producing the paper, including writing, editing, photography, layout, and copy editing. *The Spectrum* is almost entirely financially self-supporting through advertising and contributions from the PTSO.

**Student Council:** This primary student government group consists of more than 45 students: elected representatives of their classes and also walk-on members. Student Council is responsible
for organizing schoolwide activities and fundraisers and for disbursing funds for improvement of the school facility on behalf of its students. They meet weekly on Tuesdays at 6 p.m. in the ABRHS Counseling Center.

“Window Seat”: Acton-Boxborough’s Literary and Art Magazine and Creative Writing Club annually publishes two to three issues of student poetry, prose, lyrics, essays, narratives, translations, and art. Students write, edit, design, print, assemble, publicize, and distribute the magazine. Students write creatively every week to generate submissions for the magazine; the magazine welcomes and encourages students not participating in the club to submit their art and writing for consideration for publication. Art students also meet weekly to create art or illustrations for specific pieces of writing for the magazine. "Window Seat” students work in conjunction with the Robert Creeley Foundation to host the annual Robert Creeley poetry reading and the Helen Creeley student poetry prize, a competition for student poets that awards the winning students a cash prize and the honor to be an opening reader for the Robert Creeley award-winning poet. Poems submitted for the competition often are published in the magazine, and art generated by the Foundation’s Broadside Project appears in the mid-year issue. Students also conduct fundraising to supplement the budget allotted by the school.

Idiosyncrasy: The high school topical magazine, Idiosyncrasy, began years ago when a group of enthusiastic students approached then English teacher Dennis Kavanagh with the idea. The magazine puts out two to three issues per year. Idiosyncrasy is a thematic magazine that highlights a unique cultural aspect in every issue with each writer approaching it from a different perspective. The magazine encourages and celebrates the diversity of our world and the people in it. Idiosyncrasy is composed of editorial and factual articles that are intended to educate and inspire readers. Students conduct research, analysis, and synthesis in order to produce each issue.

Harvard Model Congress: Seven juniors represented ABRHS at this four-day government simulation. The Acton League of Women voters generously underwrote their participation. Those representing were Michael Altiere, Avishee Gupta, Emily Hedison, Michael Kilpatrick, Matt Kokkinos, Nikhil Manocha and Alan Samanta.

Career Exploration Activities: Beginning in November, approximately 115 students made one-day job shadowing visits to a variety of work sites. This program owes its success to the support of the Middlesex West Chamber of Commerce School-Business Partnership Committee and to parents and other local residents willing to host students. At three Career Speaker events during the year, career speakers talked to groups of students interested in their fields of work; over 165 students attended each of the three events. Fifty members of the senior class completed three-week full-time internships at the end of the school year. Other career exploration activities included the Senior Seminar course, the Work Study program, speakers who visited classrooms, and a website listing employment opportunities.

Senior Community Service Day: On April 27, the Class of 2012 spent the day working on volunteer projects in and around Acton and Boxborough. Before the seniors began their projects, they were served breakfast at the school by the faculty and administration. This was the eighteenth year that the senior class organized a Senior Community Service Day.

Community Service Activities: The school’s “Accept the Challenge Program” encourages every student to become involved in some way in volunteer activities – during the school year, during the summer, or both. The school held its twelfth Community Service Awards Night on January 16, 2012. At this ceremony 699 students received recognition for their volunteer efforts.
**Energy and Resource Conservation:** ABRHS has created the highly successful "Power Down Project" over the last two years, with students, faculty and staff all contributing to energy conservation. As a result, electricity consumption has decreased a remarkable 15%. In addition, a new student initiative in the cafeteria now captures food scraps for composting and captures 100% of recyclables, cutting solid waste dramatically. As a result of these successes, the planting of a new rain garden and other green initiatives, ABRHS received the international Green Flag award in May 2012, as well as national and state awards.

**PUPIL SERVICES**

The Acton Public Schools Preschool is an early childhood program sponsored by the district that serves children with identified special education needs and those who are developing typically as well. In the APS Preschool, now in its 19th year, students are educated side-by-side, meeting required IDEA regulations pertaining to inclusion in the least restrictive environment. In a related preschool program for children diagnosed on the autism spectrum, the growing number of students necessitated the expansion of the program – specifically, the addition of a new session in December 2011. Located at the administration building, the Preschool has now grown to six sessions (two full day and four half day) meeting four days per week.

Special Education Departments at both Acton and Acton-Boxborough consist of special educators, speech/language specialists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists – a cohesive group of talented and dedicated staff. Educational and therapeutic disciplines communicate regularly to provide highly effective services to our students. Each department has developed long-range goals that provide direction for the departments and are complementary to the Superintendent’s Long Range Strategic Plan. Individual departments are highly organized, providing a continuum of services across schools.

In reaching for the stars, special educators, specialists, and clinicians want our students to maximally develop literacy and communication skills for life-long learning and to increase the use of assistive technology for eligible students as one of many tools that are necessary to succeed educationally and within our society today. Additionally, school-based committees have been established to address the transitional needs of our special education students, adhering to new regulatory requirements for post-secondary planning. Administrators and staff develop both short- and long-term goals to ensure a continuum of programs across all schools.

At the secondary level, working with adolescents requires the gathering of information pertaining to potential problems, referring students and their families to appropriate agencies when a need is determined, attending meetings and conferences for students to assist with problems that include, but are not limited to, attendance, stress management, and mental health issues. Moreover, effective communication and a strong sense of connectedness between and among law enforcement, school officials, and the community are critical components of our commitment to a safe school environment. Our school resource officers provide professional networking and liaison support between the school district and law enforcement, work closely with building principals, and develop personal relationships with students and faculty to ensure a visible presence within all schools. In addition to instructional programming, our school resource officers provide the district with crisis intervention, consultation and legal law enforcement support, as well as an immediate response for custody issues, drug and substance abuse offenses, teen dating issues, thefts, and graffiti.
The English Learner Education (ELE) program highlights the growing trend at the elementary schools and increased regulatory requirements at the state and federal levels. The program benefited from an additional part-time ELE Chairperson for the first time, allowing for more integrated instructional programming across the district, more ELE involvement in district-based initiatives, and improved ability to address changes in Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) requirements. The program also benefited from some increases in staffing for direct services.

Due to the fact that the Acton Public Schools transitioned from a “low-incidence” to a “moderate-incidence” ELE district, the district became eligible for federal funding, called Title III, which was used in the spring and summer for before- and after-school tutoring, summer ELE support services, and increased family support through an ELE Family Information Fair. These improvements are only one step to addressing the demands of increased student enrollment and increased federal and state mandates regarding the academic needs of this growing population.

Parent outreach and communication within Pupil Services continues to be paramount, ensuring that open dialogue between parents/guardians and the school is accomplished. The SpEd PAC is an integral part of the Pupil Services organization, offering parents/guardians resources and family support. Specifically, the PAC has worked to provide practical information regarding special education regulations, home activities, summer camp ideas, and transitional guidance. Additionally, the PAC completed its 2011 Parents Survey; the Pupil Services Department accepted this report as one of many paths of hearing input from parents.

Parents indicated increased satisfaction with bullying prevention and intervention strategies implemented by the district; the satisfaction gap between parents of students on the Autism Spectrum versus parents of students with Specific Learning Disabilities narrowed by more than half. Parents continued to express strong positive opinions about the IEP process and communication with the district. In response, Pupil Services will continue with safety and wellness initiatives and will continue to review with administrators and faculty the bullying requirements so that prompt and efficient action can take place wherever bullying is present. It goes without saying that our schools want to create an environment in which all students feel safe – at school, at lunch, hall and recess. Reviewing the data of incidents – especially in unstructured situations, continuing to increase supervision where needed, and emphasizing to our students that a core curriculum involves the acceptance of differences and mutual respect will be done through discussion, training, and charting of data to ensure compliance.

An analysis by primary disability showed that parents of children with Specific Learning Disabilities were very satisfied with special education services and programs, whereas parents of children on the Autism Spectrum were concerned with their children’s access to experiences with typical peers. In response, during the summer 2012, Pupil Services partnered with Community Education to pilot a social skills program for students with intensive social skills goals in their IEP, with a Special Educator on site to oversee the program and a Special Education Assistant to support each group of students. A pilot program provided students with special needs a summer opportunity with typical peers with normalized classes, such as “iMovie,” “Robot,” “Cooking,” “Animation,” and “Game Design.” We will continue our efforts in being open with our discussions, seeking advice, and offering honest opinions of our approaches to solving problems.

The Essential Health Grant (ESHS), in its fifth year of funding, continued to provide leadership and resources for the Health and Nursing Department. The district hopes to be eligible for renewal. In keeping with the staff training mandates of the Life-Threatening Allergy Policy and Procedures, the nursing department, in collaboration with the educational technology department and the broader
vision of Pupil Services, produced an on-line learning module with quiz. The on-line availability for training purposes eliminated the challenges of training a large number of staff in multiple locations, with varied schedules, absences, possible inconsistencies of content delivery among live trainers, etc. A key feature of the program is that designated administrators can access the results of the quiz for the purposes of tracking compliance with the training and further targeting training needs.

Emergency preparedness has always been an important consideration for our schools. To that end, the nursing department also performed annual CPR and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) drills for currently certified staff, taught two CPR/AED classes, procured yearly physician reviews of AED protocols, and procured necessary equipment to maintain the AEDs in each of the seven schools.

In order to comply with Massachusetts Law 105 CMR 201.000 enacted in June 2011, the school nurses, in conjunction with the Director of Pupil Services, school counseling, school committee members, and the high school athletic director, developed a Head Injury Management Policy and Head Injury Management Protocols. The Policy, approved by school committee in February 2012, addresses standardized procedures for medical and academic management and return to extracurricular activities for all students.

Pupil Services has traditionally held professional development opportunities through lectures, discussions, and slide presentations. Although these are credible ways of having face-to-face opportunities to discuss issues and reflect on newly acquired information, it falls short when calculating the time needed, the scheduling hurdles, and the individual participant’s time on each topic and slide to acquire this set of new skills. During the 2011-2012 school year, staff brainstormed better ways of acquiring a new skill set while at the same time meeting the ever-changing requirements of mandated training from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). In order to reduce scheduling conflicts and free up more time for faculty and staff, e-learning for selected Civil Rights modules were piloted for professional development. These modules covered basic skills rather than complex skills in which discussion and brainstorming are needed through face-to-face interactions. Every staff member had the opportunity to electronically thumb through the training, review the training and slides, and offer feedback, from the ease of the site to the quality of the training. The Pupil Services leadership team looks forward to offering staff flexibility, mastery, and a platform for acquiring new information differently.

In closing, the goals of Pupil Services continue to place the highest value on creating an environment that is not only safe but also nurturing for every student to learn, achieve, and succeed.

PERFORMING ARTS

At the Acton-Boxborough Regional High School, the band and chorus programs continued to flourish as they performed in and around our community, and elsewhere. In addition to marching in our own Acton Memorial Day Parade, the band marched in a number of parades outside of our community, including the Marlborough Labor Day Parade, the Boston Columbus Day Parade, and the Quincy Christmas Parade (where they took 1st place overall). The ABRHS Band travelled to Washington, D.C., where they marched in the 100th Anniversary Cherry Blossom Festival Parade. They had an opportunity to visit our nation’s great monuments and memorials and also performed at the Jefferson Memorial. A number of our choral ensembles sang at West Acton’s Oktoberfest and at a number of senior citizen events. The choral department put on an outstanding talent show,
traditionally known as “Cabaret.” Nineteen of our student musicians from band, chorus and orchestra were selected to perform at the MMEA Eastern District Festival held in January; ten of them earned All-State recommendations. Our Madrigal Singers put on a Madrigal Dinner for the community, at which they performed a renaissance-style dinner theater.

At the R. J. Grey Junior High School, the eighth-grade band and chorus each participated in the Great East Music Festival, held at West Springfield High School in May. Each received Gold Medals for their performances. The JHS musical, “Guys and Dolls,” had a terrific run of performances with a huge cast of approximately eighty students involved. Twenty-one students were selected to perform in the concert band, orchestra or chorus at the MMEA Eastern Junior District Music Festival held in March. The seventh- and eighth-grade band marched in the Boxborough Memorial Day Parade.

At the elementary schools, the Beginning and Advanced Bands performed very well in their Winter and Spring Concerts. The bands also performed at each school’s Memorial Day assembly, along with songs and poems performed by individual classes. The Gates School’s chorus sang in a Pan Choral Concert with members of the junior high and high school choruses. The combined Acton Elementary School Band marched in the Acton Memorial Day Parade.

**VISUAL ARTS**

Throughout the school year, student efforts and accomplishments in the Visual Arts program were exhibited in each of the seven schools and the High School Administrative Conference Room, as well as off-site venues. Student artwork appeared in various school newsletters, and drawings by kindergarten students graced the cover of the Kindergarten Handbook.

In the highly competitive Boston Globe Scholastic Art Awards, ABRSD students (29 high school and 3 junior high) received a total of 33 state-level awards. These awards included: nine Gold Key Awards, ten Silver Key Awards, and fourteen Honorable Mention Awards. The Gold Key and Silver Key student work was exhibited at the State Transportation Building in Boston during January and February. Award-winning students were recognized at an awards ceremony at Hancock Hall in Boston. Student work receiving Gold Key Awards was sent to New York for the National Scholastics judging. The K-12 Visual Arts Director serves on the Massachusetts Scholastics Advisory Board.

Each of the two ABRHS juniors who applied to Art All-State at the Worcester Art Museum was selected for the program. These AB juniors were among 145 high school juniors statewide who were selected to participate in the competitive program at the Museum, held in May. Art All-State is a weekend-long program for high school art juniors to work with their peers and with practicing artists who serve as mentors. Selection is based upon digital images of student work, a written application, and an interview with a team of art educators. The K-12 Visual Arts Director serves on the Art All-State Steering Committee.

Senior students in the ABRHS Portfolio class prepared and exhibited their artwork in a show entitled “Eclections,” which was held at the Acton Memorial Library in April. AB Portfolio class students participated in a fourth year of an interdisciplinary unit of study between the English and Visual Arts departments. Collaboration included multi-grade levels of students in English and Visual Arts classes working together and connecting with the community-based Robert Creeley Foundation. Portfolio students created broadside designs to accompany Creeley Foundation Award Winning Poet Thomas Lux’s work. One student’s artwork was chosen for the broadside design, which was printed in a limited edition.
The work of Acton-Boxborough Photography students was included in a photography show at the State Transportation Building in Boston, sponsored by the Massachusetts Education Association. High school students had the opportunity to participate in Photo Club and in Art Club, each of which met after school one afternoon a week throughout the year.

One high school art teacher and students in his Animation classes collaborated with two elementary art teachers to create short animations featuring the clay sculptures of McCarthy-Towne grade 2 students and Conant School grade 6 students' wire sculptures.

During March, Acton and Acton-Boxborough student artwork was exhibited in the annual Youth Art Month Show at the Worcester Art Museum. Thirty-six APS/AB student works were included. There was an opening reception for students, their families, and art teachers in the Museum's Renaissance Court. All seven schools were represented in this show.

The artwork of fifty-eight students, from grades K-12 and representing all the schools, was in the exhibit, "People," at the Sargent Memorial Library, Boxborough. This show ran April through June. Also, an exhibit of representative student artwork from each of the schools was on display at the Acton Senior Center during the month of May. The work of thirty-seven students was included in this exhibit. An opening reception was held for students, parents and teachers.

K-12 Visual Arts staff participated in the fourth year of a curriculum review. They collaborated to develop K-12 student learning goals and continued to review and revise units of study and to develop assessment rubrics. To learn a new protocol for looking at and talking about art to share with art staff, the Visual Arts K-12 director attended a three-day session on "Visual Thinking Strategies" at the New Orleans Museum of Art during July.

Art teachers and art students have been involved in "green" projects at ABRHS. A student in Digital Imagery designed signs that are used in the cafeteria to indicate the various waste disposal methods. Students in Drawing and Painting designed "Power Down" switch plate frames that are in use with light switches in all classrooms throughout the school. Students applied recently learned concepts of color theory to these switch plate frame designs to call attention to the green initiative – to remind students and teachers to turn off the lights when rooms are not in use.

At both elementary and secondary levels, art teachers applied for and received R&D grants to develop and refine units of study and assessment documents in the Visual Arts Curriculum. Funded by an R&D grant, the two RJG art teachers collaborated with RJG music and drama teachers to plan an "Arts Happening" that will take place at RJG in May. The RJG art teachers also are piloting student use of iPads for research and creating artwork in Art 1 and Art II classes.

Elementary art teachers organized on-site art shows, field trips and artist visits. There was a K-6 Art Show at Gates School in May and Grade 6 Sculpture Shows at both McCarthy-Towne and Merriam Schools in June. The art teacher at Gates took students on a trip to visit the MFA and arranged for an artist to visit the school. At Merriam School the art teacher received a Cultural Council grant to fund visiting artists at the school. Student work inspired by the work of these artists was on display at the Acton Memorial Library.
TECHNOLOGY

The Department of Educational Technology (EDTech) combines infrastructure, data management, and desktop support services with on-site technology integration and instruction to meet the needs of all members of our learning community. Understanding that learning powered by technology can help transform education, the department looks to ensure seamless integration of technology into the curriculum while enabling all students with the 21st Century skills needed to compete in our global society.

Under the direction of the Superintendent, the district approved a five-year “Long Range Strategic Plan” that includes a goal to create a teaching and learning environment in which all students use information, technology, and communication tools in sophisticated ways to enhance learning.

One of the department’s main strategies to support this goal included developing a plan that would allow each student access to technology when educationally appropriate. As a result, the department created a new online eco-system for students and all staff members at the Acton-Boxborough Regional High School. Branded as “ABschools” and powered by Google Apps for Education, this system will, over time, prove to be an important step toward developing a 21st-Century approach to teaching and learning. The suite of online tools provides the students and staff with methods of communicating information easier (Gmail & Calendar), collaborating on group projects more often (Google Docs), and creating or publishing authentic work (Sites) seamlessly. Results from the end-of-year student survey demonstrated the students’ overall use of the new system, with 71% of seniors expressing frequent use of “email” and “docs” as part of their required classwork, for extra-curricular activities, and/or for personal use. Along with the survey, students expressed positive reviews of ABschools through various outlets, most notably in the school’s newspaper, The Spectrum. Overall, it is expected that use will continue to grow at the high school and plans to expand access of ABschools to our junior high students are underway. Recognizing an increased demand for hardware as a result of implementing ABschools, the department purchased through the appropriated budget ninety netbook devices ($42,000) for high school students as a cost-effective gateway device to the Internet, ABschools, and other cloud-based services. A similar purchase of thirty netbook devices ($14,000) was also made for the students at the junior high.

Other hardware purchases included in the FY 2012 appropriated budget for the high school included thirty iMac desktops ($31,752) to replace ten-year-old e-Macs in the visual arts graphics lab and ten SmartBoards ($20,000) for classrooms. At RJ Grey, appropriated budget resources were used to replace an aging lab with thirty Windows computers ($23,913). In the Acton Public Schools, all kindergarten classrooms were equipped with ceiling mounted projectors ($12,000) purchased from the appropriated budget. These projectors provided our teachers with the ability to utilize their MacBook and iPad devices for instructional purposes.

The 2011-2012 school year saw an increased awareness by the department that all successful technology initiatives must rely on providing effective professional learning opportunities for teachers and staff members. To meet this need, the department filled an existing vacancy with a full-time instructional technology teacher. Revitalizing the department’s efforts for preparing our teachers with increased technology skills, the instructional technology team increased before- and after-school workshops, provided graduate level technology courses, and facilitated hybrid-online courses for adults. Classes were held at least twice a month at each school location and included sessions in creating interactive classroom lessons for the SmartBoards, understanding mobile
learning, and introducing Google Apps into the classroom. As a result, teachers who attended these trainings felt better prepared and more confident in using technology as an instructional tool to better meet the needs of all of their students.

Along with providing more face-to-face learning with staff, the EDTech instructional technology team completed a brand new website designed to be the “source for all of your technology needs.” The site (http://edtechab.abschools.org) not only includes easy access to the district’s technology standards and benchmarks, but also includes sample lessons designed to meet these standards. There is also a section on cool tech tips to try in the classroom, accessing assistive technology tools, and complete access to our FAQs and “How-Do-I’s. As a way to increase communication to all of the stakeholders within the schools, the instructional technology team also created a Twitter account and Facebook page. These accounts are used to distribute information about the department, educational policy and trends, and more. Please take a moment to follow the group the next time you are on Twitter!

Looking to consistently provide updated technology to staff and students, the department reviewed and updated the technology standards to meet district, business, and classroom requirements. As the proliferation of cloud-based Internet services continued to grow in 2011-2012, the department approved the use of more cost-effective devices to be added to the network. With the introduction of tablets, such as iPads and netbooks, the department was able to increase access to technology for our students, teachers, and administration without significantly impacting the budget. As technology continues to evolve and prices continue to fall, more research and development will be done on behalf of the operations team to incorporate into our infrastructure effective hardware that will positively impact our teaching and learning community.

In 2011-2012, operational technology purchases were made in order to maintain and/or enhance computer and network services to our teaching and learning community. The department upgraded the network’s firewall device to a Unified Threat Management system. The new system was able to replace seven aging individual pieces of equipment to reduce the department’s overhead by 50% and lower the yearly support and maintenance costs of each service. The UTM (SonicWall NSA E5500) provides support for up to four ISP connections, which can enable the district to meet the demand for increased bandwidth as more devices continue to access our network and routinely use cloud-based services.

**SUMMER SCHOOL**

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School District Summer School had another successful year in 2012. With our enrollment of 534 students, 96% were Acton & Boxborough residents. Four percent of our students came from seven other districts. Several Math, Science, and Physical Education courses reached capacity early in the summer, allowing us to add additional sections of Math and Science and, therefore, forcing us to turn away fewer students (than in 2011) not currently enrolled in the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District.

Summer School course changes included the addition of a Literature course and the addition of a new Advanced Biology Course. The low enrollment in the elementary school program forced us to close it. As a result, we plan to roll out a new elementary program for summer 2013. Changes will include: a longer Elementary School day; specials like PE, Art, Science and Technology; and an increase in staffing to do more to meet the needs of each student.
The number of student scholarships stayed the same as in 2011. Increased need for financial services directly from the program came as a result of other community outreach/campership programs not having the resources to meet the increased community needs.

Tuition receipts continue to allow us to function as a self-sustaining educational program. We continue to serve Acton, Boxborough, and several outlying communities with first-rate, summertime, grades 1-12 educational opportunities.

**COMMUNITY EDUCATION**

The Community Education office is located in the Administration Building, 15 Charter Road, Acton. Its staff organizes, staffs, and directs the following programs and activities.

**Day and Evening Classes:** Each year, Community Ed. offers nearly 2,000 classes for children, teens and adults. Classes and other programs are posted on the Community Ed. website: [http://comed.ab.mec.edu](http://comed.ab.mec.edu) and advertised in *INTERACTION*, the course catalog that is mailed four times a year to over 20,000 area homes. More than 10,000 students enroll in classes annually.

**Extended Day:** Serving 300 Acton families, Extended Day offers quality before- and after-school care for 400 children in grades K-6. Community Ed. runs a program at the Administration Building, as well as school-based programs at Conant, Gates, and McCarthy-Towne Schools.

**All-Day Kindergarten Program:** Community Ed. administers the business affairs of the All-Day Kindergarten program at each elementary school.

**Summer Day Program:** Located at the Administration Building, this program offers weeklong sessions to an average of ninety children per week in grades K-6. The program has been expanded to include a half-day option for children entering Kindergarten. Activities include: Arts and Crafts, Music and Drama, Cooperative Games, Red Cross Swim Lessons, Free Swim, and Special Events.

**Vacation Week Programs:** During February and April school vacations, Community Ed. runs childcare programs that include a variety of field trips and enrichment activities. Community Ed. has been adding one-day programs on other “No School” days (e.g., Columbus Day, Election Day, Martin Luther King Day) to assist parents needing childcare.

**Youth Basketball League:** From December to March almost 900 boys and girls in grades 3-12 participate in weekly practices and league play. The league is staffed by more than 150 paid and volunteer coaches, timers, and referees.

**Driver Education:** Community Ed. runs a Registry-approved driving school, offering classroom instruction and on-road training to more than 300 students each year. To address the needs of busy teens, offerings have been expanded to Sunday sessions and weeklong sessions during school vacations.

**Pool & Field House Programs:** Located at ABRHS, the Pool & Field House Program provides the public with opportunities to use the high school pool and field house on the weekends. In addition to open swim and gym, Community Ed. runs a full Red Cross Swim Program, a youth swim team, master’s competitive swimming, morning and evening lap swim, and water exercise classes. Community Ed. is continuing to offer options for teens by staffing additional (and popular!) weeknight Open Gym hours at the high school Field House.
Fitness Center: Community Ed. oversees public drop-in times at the Fitness Center, located at the Acton-Boxborough Regional High School. New in 2012 was the move to an all-volunteer team of supervisors and expanded hours of operation to include some vacations and holiday weekends.

Scheduling Use of School Fields: Little League, Softball, Pop Warner, Youth Lacrosse, and Youth Soccer, as well as individuals, businesses and community organizations, receive permits for school field use through Community Ed. Fees charged are returned to the school district to support the facilities.

Scheduling Use of School Buildings: Use of the seven school buildings outside of school hours is scheduled through Community Ed.

Community Education receives no funding from the school districts or towns and runs all programs on a self-sustaining basis. Moneys are returned to the districts to use for space and equipment. For more information about Community Education and the programs that it offers, call (978) 266-2525.

**FACILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION**

In a department where much occurred this past year, we are most proud that Acton-Boxborough Regional High School was recognized for significant success in energy conservation and waste reduction by being the 4th school in the United States to be awarded the international Green Flag. The Green Flag is a framework adopted in more than fifty countries with a focus on promoting sustainability in K-12 schools and is hosted in the U.S. by the National Wildlife Federation. We also were honored by the National Energy Education Development Project (NEED) with their National Rookie of the Year award for the ABRHS Power Down Project. NEED is a highly regarded national non-profit focused on developing and supporting energy education curriculum. Additionally, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs recognized the Power Down Project by granting the Secretary’s Award for Excellence in Energy and Environmental Education. Everyone involved was very proud to be recognized, but we are most gratified by the significant cost savings and reduction in environmental impact that resulted. In ABRSD and APS combined, we have achieved a reduction in energy consumption from our benchmark year of 2009 of twenty-four percent and an approximately forty percent reduction in waste being sent to landfills. From the perspective of the taxpayer, these reductions represent an annual savings of over $400,000.

As a Facilities Department, we were very much involved in the planning and implementation of the landscape-changing Lower Fields Project. This project created a first-class recreational asset for the school community in direct support of the ABRSD and APS Long Range Strategic Plan, as well as a much-needed outlet for the Acton and Boxborough communities at large. We thank the voters for supporting the project at Town Meeting, and we are happy to report that AB student athletes were able to begin practices on the new Lower Fields in August. Financial projections presented throughout the process for the Fields’ external rental revenue are right on target.

We look forward to supporting the school district this coming year. To keep up with current projects and information, we can be followed on twitter@abfacilities. Please feel free to contact the Facilities Department at anytime with questions, comments, or concerns.
IN CONCLUSION

This report demonstrates that the Acton Public Schools and the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District are complex organizations. Nonetheless, the districts possess a clear mission and vision. They are fortunate to have a dedicated staff that make a habit of constant self-reflection and, as resources allow, of renewal.

Our students, teachers, and administrators continue to perform at high levels – academically, athletically, artistically, personally, and professionally – and so the Acton Public Schools and the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District maintain a reputation that attracts people to the communities and to our schools. It is our intention to continue to provide the best possible education to the communities and to seek continued financial and moral support for this very important endeavor.

The towns of Acton and Boxborough have a great investment in the schools since the schools serve the communities’ youth and adult populations through public schooling, Community Education, and as a center for much community activity. This is a win-win situation for both the towns and the schools that we want to maintain for the future.

Stephen E. Mills
Superintendent of Schools
On Behalf of the School Committees
January 2013