

## REPORT OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

To the Inhabitants of the Town of Abington:

It is my privilege, on behalf of my fellow board members, to present to the citizens of Abington for their consideration our annual report. The current makeup of the Abington School Committee includes: Brenda L. Pignone, Chairperson; Wayne K. Rogiers, Vice Chairperson; Russell W. FitzGerald, Secretary; Patricia Vantine and James West, Members. Rebecca Keohane serves as the student representative to the Abington School Committee.

Once again, it was a busy year for the Abington School Committee. In addition to regularly scheduled monthly meetings, there were several special hearings/forums conducted which addressed budget, school choice, test results from the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAS) and issues related to our Long Range Master Plan for Abington School Facilities.

At last April's Abington Annual Town Meeting, an FY-2007 budget of \$16,794,000.00 was approved for the Abington Public Schools. However, finalization of an operating budget was delayed due to tardy notification of federal grant allocations which resulted in a reduction of almost \$70,000.00. This reduction resulted in the elimination of a grade 3-6 reading teacher and the loss of other remedial services for our students.

The increase of \$993,798.00 in the school department's FY-2007 operating budget represents approximately a 6.3% increase over FY-2006 levels of funding. Members of the Abington School Committee played a key role in convincing the Abington Finance Committee, Abington Board of Selectmen and citizens at the Annual Town Meeting to support an increase in school funding. Given the unprecedented increases in energy costs, mandated costs in special and contractual obligations, the FY-2007 budget could not support adding new programs, services or staff. Compared to the plight of other school districts in Massachusetts where programs, services and staff had to be reduced, the Abington Public Schools were fortunate.

I am happy to report that some progress was made during FY-2007 to address facility projects highlighted in our district's Long-Range Master Plan for School Facilities (2004). The school department is grateful that the following steps were taken to address facility needs:

- the expenditure of \$1,133,041.00 to complete the construction and reconstruction of the Early Childhood Center's roof and water drainage systems;
- the required support from the Abington School Committee and Board of Selectmen to submit Statement of Interest Forms to the Massachusetts School Building Authority for school construction and renovation projects to address our school facility needs for the next 40-50 years;
- the support given by the townspeople at the November Special Town Meeting and subsequent town election in December for the passage of a \$1,191,000.00 Proposition 2 1/2 debt exclusion for the replacement of the windows at the Early Childhood Center;
- the transfer at the November Special Town Meeting of \$85,439.50 from a previously voted article to fund the completion of surveys, plans, studies, architectural designs, engineering or other required documents to advance the construction of a new grades 5-8 middle school as recommended in the Facilities' Master Plan; and

- the appropriation of \$106,680.00 at the November Special Town Meeting to purchase computers, related equipment and software as proposed in the school department's Technology Plan.

As 2006 comes to a close, the school administration was busy finalizing the school department's FY-2008 Preliminary Budget Proposal for presentation to the Abington School Committee in early January 2007. Escalating increases for mandated special education services and out-of-district placements and fixed employee costs will present special challenges to the Committee as FY-2008 budget deliberations move forward.

Annually, the Abington School Committee reviews, updates and approves detailed action plans to support our district's Vision 2008 Strategic Plan. The six (6) action plans establish priorities for our school improvement efforts in each of our goal areas on student achievement, facilities, finance, technology, community partnerships and citizenship. Copies of the Vision 2008 Strategic Plan are available to the public in all school offices.

During 2006, the Abington Public Schools continued to implement the many provisions of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 and No Child Left Behind, the 2002 landmark federal education law. Curriculum development activities and the professional development of our staff remained top priorities. With a focus on our second Five-Year Curriculum Review and Update Plan and the ninth administration of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment Tests (MCAS); faculty, staff and administration continue to revise curriculum, instructional strategies and assessment practices.

The Committee also accepted with regret the retirement notices of the following faculty and staff:

Mildred Donovan – Science Teacher  
Sam Kaufman – Science Teacher  
James Kelliher – Mathematics Teacher  
Richard Kelly – English Teacher  
Jeffrey Kent – English Teacher and Athletic Director  
Jane McDougall – Paraprofessional  
Jacalynn Mercer – Elementary Teacher  
Nancy Moran – Woodsdale Elementary School Principal  
Kathleen Pearse – School Secretary  
Patricia Short – Foreign Language Teacher and Department Head  
Alan Strondak – Mathematics Teacher

These individuals have served the Town of Abington well, and we wish them the best in their retirement years.

In closing, I would like to thank the entire school department staff, townspeople, clubs, organizations and volunteers for their cooperation and continued support of the children of Abington during these difficult financial times. I especially would like to express my gratitude to all members of the School Committee and the administrative staff for their continued assistance.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda L. Pignone, *Chairperson*  
*Abington School Committee*