

REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

To the Citizens of the Town of Abington:

It is with great pride that I submit the annual report from your schools as your Superintendent. It has been a busy and productive year, one filled with commendation, accomplishments and perseverance.

Importantly, I must first recognize all of the individuals assisting us with our success. I cannot adequately express my gratitude to the School Committee, Administrators, faculty, staff, community volunteers, parents and students who selflessly and actively contribute to the fulfillment of our goals and objects. There is no finer collection of different individuals all invested in our mission, "...to provide all students with challenging educational experiences necessary to reach their potential and become informed responsible citizens."

Education Reform and School Improvement

Our school district's improvement efforts continue to be driven by the many mandates and high standards established by the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 and the Federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The data driven annual development of individual school improvement plans, the K-12 review and update of curriculum in all disciplines and its alignment to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, the establishment of high performance standards for teaching and administrative personnel and the administration of ten cycles of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment Test (MCAS) have all contributed to improved teaching and learning for students.

Despite limited financial resources, your school system annually advances academically by continuing to make the highly aggressive targets of *Adequate Yearly Progress* as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act. Simply put, although your school system has one of the lowest per pupil expenditures in the state, it compares academically to the most progressive and highest performing schools in the Commonwealth.

The Education Reform Act of 1993 mandated the development of Curriculum Frameworks for seven discipline areas. Those disciplines are Mathematics, Science and Technology/Engineering, History and Social Science, English Language Arts, World Languages, the Arts and Health. These frameworks articulate a vision of learning, teaching and student assessment in each discipline, as well as learning standards that outline the specifics of what Massachusetts students are expected to know and be able to do at the various levels of their schooling. These documents continue to be used to provide direction to the ongoing curriculum revision being conducted by local curriculum study and writing teams. This year also brought the evaluation and revision of Abington's Five-Year Curriculum Review and Update Plan document. The third five year plan places special emphasis on the need to implement curricula that prepares students for challenges of the Conceptual Age. During the 2007-2008 school year, curriculum efforts are focused on the review and plan of curriculum in English Language Arts (PreK-5), Science and Engineering/ Technology (3-8), History and Social Science (5 & 6).

In 2001 the Massachusetts Department of Education issued technology benchmark standards for all school. These benchmark standards clearly define what PreK-12 students should know and be able to do in order to use technology for learning. The standards also

prescribe the type and amount of technology our students should have access to in classrooms, libraries and computer laboratory settings. The \$54,500.⁰⁰ appropriated at the November 5, 2007 Abington Special Town Meeting for our school district's Technology Plan has provided needed funds to replace outdated computers and software in Abington High School (20), the Woodsdale Elementary School (10), and the Early Childhood Center (20). The students and staff are grateful to the citizens of Abington for their support in this area.

Personnel Changes

As a result of a of retirements and a number of resignations, the beginning of a new school year in August 2007 brought with it the hiring of over 25 new employees in the Abington Public Schools.

There are a number of important changes to the administrative staff for the 2007-2008 school year. Dr. John J. Aherne retired as the Superintendent of the Abington Public Schools after 15 years of dedicated and exemplary service to the students and staff of the Abington Public Schools. After fourteen years in education as a teacher, assistant principal, principal and assistant superintendent it is my honor and privilege to serve as his replacement. Ms. Kathleen Dowling, retired from her position as the Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services and was replaced by Dr. Dympna Thomas. Dr. Thomas comes to Abington after successful years as a classroom teacher, assistant principal and principal. After returning out of retirement for one year, Mr. Joseph Sergi resigned as the Principal of the North School. He has been replaced by Ms. Amy Scolaro; a former teacher at Abington's the Early Childhood Center.

Staff Induction and Professional Development

Over the summer months, (60) faculty and staff were involved in a variety of curriculum development projects. For example, seventeen (17) elementary teachers participated in a reading pilot programs workshop, seven staff members worked on updating McDougal Litell (ELA) and three high school science teachers were involved in the development of curriculum for semester science course on content issues. In addition, a large number of staff members participated in graduate courses.

A separate orientation day for new teachers was held on Thursday, August 23, 2007. The traditional back-to-school program for all faculty, tutors and paraprofessionals was held on Monday, August 27, 2007.

Major professional development initiatives for the 2007-2008 school are designed to enhance the talents, expand the interests, improve the competence and renew the vitality of faculty members. Key initiatives of our 2007-2008 plan include teacher participation in programs and workshops in the use of technology across the curriculum, literacy, Response to Intervention, Dibels Assessment, NEASC, Co-teaching Models, Writing Across the Curriculum, a variety of individual professional development choices and continuing initiatives for beginning teachers such as the Beginner Teacher Institute at the North River Collaborative.

Abington Education Foundation

The Abington Education Foundation (AEF) once again had a very active and successful year. The Foundation's main goal is to encourage, promote and sponsor educational experiences and learning opportunities for students and teachers in the Abington Public Schools. I would like to thank Mr. Beau Ryan, the outgoing President of the AEF, for his dedicated service. It is my pleasure to welcome and congratulate Ms. Kathy Riley and the President. I am looking forward to working with year during her tenure in her new leadership role. The Foundation, in conjunction with the Jeffrey Coombs Memorial Fund, awarded over \$20,000.⁰⁰ in mini-grants for the 2007-2008 school year and sponsored its tenth annual golf tournament on June 4, 2007 at the Ridder Country Club.

Assessment and Accountability

In the spring of 2007, all public schools in Massachusetts administered the tenth round of examinations under the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). In Massachusetts, to comply with No Child Left Behind requirements, in 2007 all grade 3-8 and grade 10 students were tested in English Language Arts/Reading and Math. In addition, grade 5 and 8 students were tested in Science and Engineering/Technology, grade 9 and 10 students were tested in Science, tryout questions were administered to grade 5 and 7 students in History and Social Science and pilot questions were administered to grades 10 and 11 in U.S. History. In all, twenty-two tests were administered in 2007.

Nationally and for a second time, Massachusetts has outscored every other state in the country on the NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress), the nation's report card. The results showed that students in Massachusetts are making significant achievement gains.

Across the state, elementary and middle school results showed improvement. Among students in grades 3-8, the percent scoring in the top two levels rose between five and eight percentage points in Math and between 3 and 6 percentage points in English. This reverses the trend in the previous two years, where the performance was flat.

Abington's 2007 MCAS scores were mixed; however, trend above the state average in general. Grade 3 Math scores improved, grade 4 were flat and grade 8 declined compared to last year. The grade 10 Math scores showed significant improvement with 85 percent of the students scoring in advanced or proficient ranges compared to the state average of 69 percent. In English Language Arts, grade 3 Reading scores continue to be above the state average; however, the performance was flat, grade 6 ELA student scores showed marked improvement and grade 10 ELA scores showed a moderate gain compared to last year.

Clearly, we need to continue to improve student achievement across all areas with all students. Special focus based on the data must be provided to areas of concern. Specifically, flat or declining scores in grades 7 and 8 need to be considered and short and long term strategies for improvement must be implemented.

Based on test results from the ninth administration of the MCAS, we have identified our areas of strengths and weaknesses. We continue to implement specific programs at all levels to improve student performance in the areas of greatest weakness and to insure compliance by 2014 with the national goal set forth in the No Child Left Behind Act. The goal is that all students and every subgroup will achieve proficiency in English Language

Arts, Mathematics and Science. This goal can only be achieved by maintaining a highly qualified staff, establishing reasonable class sizes, offering targeted assistance to low performing students and reaching adequate levels of funding.

A review of SAT scores for Abington students shows that in 2007 83% of our high school seniors took the SAT and their average score in verbal (498) and in mathematics (508) was within our normal range of standardized testing for the SAT's.

Student Achievement and Activities

Post Secondary Education and Placements – Higher education placement for the Class of 2007 found approximately 89% of the graduates furthering their education with 63% going on to four year colleges and 26% to two year colleges or technical schools. Nine percent (9 %) of the graduates planned to go directly to work and 2% planned to enter the military.

Student Accomplishments – Several students received prestigious academic awards and scholarships from national, regional, state and local organizations. John Bacon received a Rensselaer Medal for Excellence in Science and Mathematics and Nicole Corbett earned the Bausch and Lomb Excellence in Science Award. Boston Globe Scholastic Art Awards were given to: Jeff Carroll, Jared Connell, Matthew Macaluso, Bridget Minnehan, Alex Temple, Victoria Traverse and Joseph Vasselian. Thirty-eight students were awarded the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship, which provides a tuition waiver for four years of undergraduate education at Massachusetts state colleges and universities. The Adams Scholarship is based on outstanding performance on MCAS.

- National Honor Society – Eighteen Abington High School students were inducted into the Abington Chapter of the National Honor Society in December 2007.
- Frolio Middle School – Devin Kenney and Bridget Wakelin received Commonwealth of Massachusetts Middle Level Educators' Student Scholar Awards.

The above examples coupled with a high level of involvement and success in extracurricular and co-curricular activities continue to be a source of great pride for the whole community.

Facility and Technology Improvements

Although funding for capital projects continued to be limited in 2007, progress was made on our Capital and Technology Plans. The heating systems and ventilation units in each of our school buildings have been cleaned and adjusted to provide maximum comfort, healthy air flow and efficiency. The wiring, in preparation for a new phone system across the system, has been completed. At the Early Childhood Center, the window replacement project is in the construction phase, several floors have been replaced along with some classroom ceilings. Repairs have been made to the North School playground fence, outdoor lighting has been improved and needed plumbing work has been completed. Several windows at the Center School have been repaired and some flooring has been replaced. There have been a few window repairs at the Frolio, extensive furnace and electrical work has been done. Needed renovations have occurred in the High School Girls' Locker Room, several floors have been replaced and lighting improvements have been made in a number of classrooms.

Substantive improvements have been made in the area of technology. Data and student information has been migrated to the new X2 platform. The remote Helpdesk System was upgraded. The network's storage capacity was increased. New servers and switches were installed in a number of schools. New computers were installed, the COWS were upgraded. All of these measures will provide the best possible computer speeds, reliability and efficiency across our school district.

Closing Comments

The successes of the students of which we are very proud are not achieved without the support of the good work of groups such as PTOs, the Greenwave Boosters and Music Association, the Abington Education Foundation, the Healthy Youth Initiative and other community service organizations, local businesses and other town departments for their many contributions to the public schools. I would be remiss if I did not extend to them my sincerest gratitude. I would also like to express my appreciation to the administrative team, the PK-12 faculty and all support personnel for their assistance and dedicated service. They labor each day in our schoolhouses, sometimes under pressures and limitations, to meet the needs of their students. They continue to work hard to implement the mandates of the Education Reform Act of 1993 and No Child Left Behind.

I wish to publicly express my appreciation to the members of the Abington School Committee for their support of the schools. Most importantly, thank you on behalf of the students; they truly benefit from the selfless hard work and commitment that you tirelessly demonstrate.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter G. Schafer
Superintendent of Schools