



Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools

Understanding Course Selection

at

R. J. Grey Junior High School

and

Acton-Boxborough Regional High School

For 2022-2023 School Year

In order to help parents/guardians make informed decisions about the appropriate course placements for their children, we provide parents/guardians of incoming 7th graders with information regarding the course selection process in general. In addition, information is provided from the mathematics, English, history/social studies, science, world language, performing arts, visual arts, and physical education/health departments in time for the spring course selection process.

This document is not produced as a hard copy, however, is posted on the Acton-Boxborough website; <http://abschools.org> and updated annually.

Questions about how to navigate course selection within a given subject area should be directed to the contact person(s) identified in each section. Please refer any general comments or concerns about this document to:

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Parents/guardians and educators are keenly aware that children undergo social, physical and intellectual development on their own unique timetable. During early adolescence – the time encompassed by the end of elementary school, the move through junior high and on to high school – that divergence of timetables both between and within individual youth can be truly breathtaking.

Against this reality of physical and personal development, the schools attempt the challenging task of providing students with an academic program consistent with their skills, learning needs, and interests. To meet the needs of developmentally and otherwise diverse learners, teachers have developed an array of classroom strategies. Through group work, independent projects, collaborative learning, and numerous other techniques, teachers support students' use of varied aspects of their abilities and, thus, enable students with opportunities to achieve. By providing varying levels of challenge within a given heterogeneous classroom, teachers can meet the needs of diverse learners within a single classroom.

Such strategies are the mark of effective teaching. In addition to employing a range of teaching approaches in classrooms, the high school levels the courses. "Leveling" is distinct from the practice of "tracking." In a "tracked" system, once students are placed in courses at a particular level, it becomes nearly impossible to leave. In traditional tracked systems, students tended to be placed in the same track for all disciplines. In a "leveled" system like ours, students have many and ongoing opportunities to move up or down through levels when doing so becomes appropriate. Students are likely to take classes at different levels in different discipline areas. And in a leveled system, parents/guardians also have the right to override the placement decisions of their children's teachers.

In this document, we seek to provide parents/guardians with background information about the course leveling approach in each department that clarifies:

- How leveled courses differ from one another.
- The criteria upon which teachers recommend students for leveled courses.
- Important academic/curricular implications associated with being placed in a course at a given level.
- The process by which parents/guardians can influence and/or override level placements.

Issues to Keep in Mind as You Consider the "Right" Level Placement for Your Child

Some students learn at the same level across all discipline areas. Many others have stronger aptitude or interest in one or two areas. Even when students have comparable aptitudes across a variety of disciplines, they are typically more interested in some disciplines than others. Therefore, it often makes sense for students to take classes in different disciplines at different levels. By varying the level, students can challenge themselves appropriately, and they can leave time in their lives for extracurricular activities, family, and social activity. Among the district's highest achieving students, only a small percentage take all-honors schedules.

Students' abilities, interests and commitments evolve over time. Those who would like to move at some future date to a higher-level course in a particular discipline area may be able to do so. This document describes what is entailed in each discipline area to make such a change.

Outside reading makes a difference. If you want to help your child learn, encourage reading and model reading yourself. Reading broadens horizons, deepens understanding, and sharpens intellectual faculties. If children make a habit of it, reading will also improve their academic achievement. The instructional leaders of the system agree that the paramount skill for academic success is reading.

Proficient readers tend to succeed across many disciplines because they have good comprehension: of text in general, of textbooks, of test questions. Their breadth of vocabulary enhances their grasp of nuance. Habitual pleasure readers bring a breadth of context to many disciplines – literature, history, the social sciences, science, the arts, and world language – to which they can more easily add new knowledge. Skillful reading tends to

kindle the curiosity and imagination for learning. Writing and reasoning skills, maturity, and motivation all play a role in academic success at the high school level, but reading above all provides a grounding for academic success as maturity and motivation grow.

“Doubling Up”: Within a given academic year, students at the high school often “double up” (i.e., take more than one course within a single department). Thus, a student enrolled in AE Chemistry might also enroll in Marine Biology; another student enrolled in U.S. History might double up by enrolling in Psychology; a third might enroll in Spanish and French simultaneously. Given the number of courses that most students must take within each discipline in order to meet college entrance requirements, there are limits to how much doubling up is possible within a given discipline area. But doubling up is one of the best ways for a student to “dig deeper” within a given academic area.

Teacher Level Recommendation and Override Processes

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

The Placement Process at R. J. Grey

The Junior High Mathematics Department levels its courses starting in grade 8. In March, 7th-grade mathematics teachers make level-placement recommendations for grade 8. Math level recommendations for 8th grade will be listed in the PowerSchool parent portal when the registration process is open. Parents/guardians will have a specified period of time to either accept or override the placement recommendations.

- If parents/guardians have concerns about the teacher’s placement recommendation, they are urged to contact the 7th-grade teacher about the concerns.
- If the parents/guardians are still in disagreement with the teacher’s recommendation, they have the right to initiate a placement override. To do so, the parents/guardians must:
 1. Complete the R.J. Grey Math Override Form, which is completed online. Access to the form will be available on the R.J. Grey website and sent via email to all families.
 2. Families must submit their override request via the online form by the stated deadline. No exceptions or extensions can be granted. The Junior High School determines the number of classes for the following year based on the number of students signed up for each at that point. We cannot accept overrides after this because it would create unbalanced classes.
 3. By completing and submitting this form, parents/guardians are indicating that they realize this was not the recommended placement and take responsibility for this decision.

The Placement Process at ABRHS

Our hope is that all of our students will develop schedules that provide an appropriate level of challenge for them. Because there is no single “right” answer about what courses to take, we have tried to design a process that allows for thoughtful communication and interaction among students and adults in order to ensure that each student has a collection of courses that is appropriate, balanced, interesting, and challenging.

Scheduling Process

Our Pupil Course Request (PCR) process is designed to meet the goals outlined above. The process begins in late winter when the online *Program of Studies* is made available to students.

As a first step, students should discuss their goals and interests with their teachers, who will make recommendations for course levels based on the students’ performance in their classes. (For some heterogeneously grouped courses, no teacher placement recommendation is necessary.) These recommendations

will be available to students and families via the PowerSchool Parent Portal. Students, with the help of their parents/guardians, will then choose elective courses to round out the core courses recommended by teachers.

On occasion, students become interested in “overriding” a teacher recommendation. Those overrides should be undertaken thoughtfully after significant discussion with school personnel and parents/guardians. **Students in grades 9-11** will have access to an electronic Override Form on the school website and will complete it with input from the Department Leader, their teacher, and counselor. **Parents/Guardians of students in grade 8** will also have access to an Override Form and should complete it as described. High School Department Leaders will reach out to families as needed to discuss the override requests.

All changes after registration week must be made through the Counseling Center.

There are deadlines that apply for all course change requests. Please see current information to determine those for the coming year. Go to the Transition to 9th Grade site on the high school website:

<http://abrhs.abschools.org/> for this and other information.

Understanding the District Approach to Course Leveling and Course Selection In the Five Leveled-Subject Areas

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

MATHEMATICS

At R. J. Grey

The mathematics curriculum at RJ Grey follows closely with the Massachusetts Curriculum Standards. Lessons and activities in all courses are designed to engage students in the mathematics practice standards:

- Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
- Reason abstractly and quantitatively
- Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
- Model with Mathematics
- Use appropriate tools strategically
- Attend to precision
- Look for and make use of structure
- Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning

7th Grade Math Course

This is a heterogeneous course that follows the Massachusetts Curriculum Standards for Grade 7 Mathematics.

8th Grade Math Courses

There are two courses of math in 8th grade. Recommendations for courses are determined using a student’s performance on tests and quizzes in conjunction with other key math success indicators such as perseverance and tolerance of productive struggle, rate of learning new material, precision and reasoning, retention, ability to recognize and use connections between concepts, ability to apply concepts to novel situations, and fluidity of math computations.

8th Grade Math: Follows the Massachusetts Curriculum Standards for Grade 8 Mathematics.

Algebra 1: Largely parallels the Algebra 1AE course at ABRHS

At ABRHS

Three years of high school math are required to graduate from ABRHS. Recommendations for 9th grade math classes are determined using the aforementioned math success indicators.

9th Grade Math Courses

Grade 9 math courses include: Geometry H, Geometry AE, Algebra I AE, Algebra I CP, Algebra I Part I, and Foundations for Algebra. Freshmen can also enroll in an Exploring Computer Science elective. Math teachers will recommend most students from “8th grade Algebra I” into a Geometry course and most students from “8th Grade Math” into an Algebra I course.

The math curriculum at ABRHS follows closely with the Massachusetts Math Curriculum Frameworks and most classes are offered at the Honors (H), Accelerated Enriched (AE), College Preparatory (CP) and College Preparatory 1 (CP1) levels. Each course level offers a different degree of difficulty, spiral review, homework expectations, in-class review for assessments, and expectations for completing unique / non-routine problems.

- For descriptions of specific high school mathematics courses, see the link for the High School Program of Studies: <http://abrhs.abschools.org/>.
- For commonly asked questions comparing different math courses and levels, see the link for the [Incoming Grade 9 Website](#).
- For a course-sequencing map, see the next page.

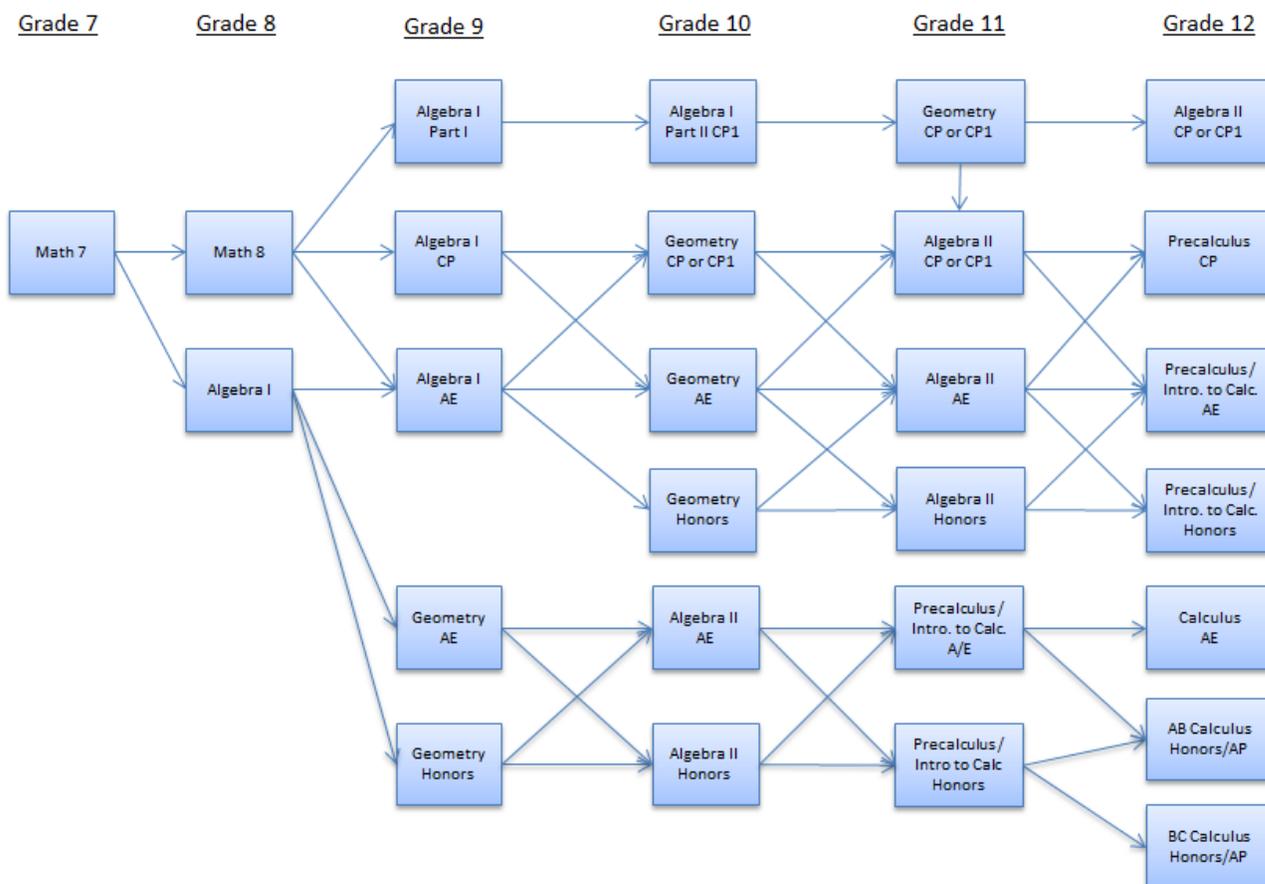
There are opportunities for upward-level movement between each school year for students who demonstrate proficiency in concepts and skills in their current class, and who are interested in taking a more abstract class the next year. Additional considerations include a student’s growth in: completing homework regularly, performing well on exams without major grade fluctuations, grasping concepts (both concrete and abstract) with a strong depth of understanding during class, the requisite problem-solving ability to apply previously taught concepts to new situations, and perseverance with nonroutine problems.

As you consider your student’s course selection for grade 8 and 9, keep in mind that proficiency of the concepts and skills in Algebra I has a high impact on future success in mathematics. We encourage families to collaborate with their students’ grade 7 and grade 8 classroom teachers to determine when your student is demonstrating readiness for Algebra I so we can best develop your student’s mathematical understanding, enjoyment of the subject, and self-confidence as a learner.

Many families are interested in having their students exposed to Calculus concepts in high school. Students who enroll in Algebra I in 8th grade will be on a path to take Calculus their senior year. Students who enroll in Algebra I in 9th grade will be on a path to take PreCalculus their senior year. While it is not common for students who enroll in Algebra I in 9th grade to take Calculus their senior year, there are double-up opportunities in Geometry & Algebra II in 10th grade. Students must qualify for this option and it requires significant time and effort. If your student enrolls in Precalculus/Introduction to Calculus (offered at the H and AE level) their senior year, the last two months of these courses are Calculus; the last two units are titled “Introduction to Limits” and “Introduction to Differential Calculus.” When they arrive in college, students from these classes have found themselves quite well prepared for collegiate Calculus I.

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Potential Sequences of Mathematics Courses, grades 7-12



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ENGLISH

At R. J. Grey

The continuing development of communication skills is the primary focus of the R. J. Grey English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum. The overall learning goals for the students are the following:

- To write for a variety of purposes: to support an idea, to tell a story, to inform or explain.
- To read, comprehend, and analyze a variety of literary texts.
- To read, comprehend, and analyze a variety of informational texts.
- To demonstrate proficiency in English grammar and usage while speaking and writing.
- To demonstrate presentation skills.
- To use collaborative skills for a common purpose.

The specific skills and objectives for each grade align with the Common Core State Standards for Massachusetts. Further information can be found on our district curriculum website:

<https://www.abschools.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=216111&pageId=477516>

Thematic units and genre studies comprise the curriculum content. Each unit consists of a variety of challenging texts and activities that address the curriculum skill standards. Students are actively involved in a range of activities within the communication spectrum, either individually or with groups of varying sizes. The units, from which teachers choose according to their needs and interests, are divided between grades seven and eight. Examples of units include: Conflict; Windows and Mirrors, Common Ground; Historical Perspectives, Self-awareness/Identity, Cultural Perspectives; Justice; War and Peace; and Memoir. Genre studies include: Short Story, Poetry, Biography, Literary Non-fiction, Mystery, and Drama/Shakespeare. Additional units are developed and others refined as new readings, materials, and/or strategies to nurture student learning emerge. To the extent that time allows, teachers work with their other team teachers to weave curriculum concepts together in interdisciplinary units.

Each unit is designed to reflect the interests and needs of the early adolescent. In many units, to provide for individual differences and interests, students have a choice of readings. They are introduced to several novels or texts, varying in storyline and reading difficulty but all on the unit theme. Students also may have independent reading opportunities throughout the year. The choice of thematic units and the literature involved in the unit may vary from team to team and year to year; however, the skill objectives and standards are consistent for all students.

At ABRHS

Four years of high school English are required to graduate from ABRHS As students prepare to leave R. J. Grey, English teachers will recommend most of the 8th grade class for English I, a heterogeneous class. A smaller number of students will be recommended for honors-level English. Students who require more instructional supports will be recommended for placement in specialized English programs.

Students in honors and heterogeneous classes read the same set of core texts. Beyond the required works, students in advanced classes will read additional, more challenging titles and will be expected to read in greater depth and with a greater degree of independence.

In all 9th grade English classes, students are regularly expected to complete writing assignments. At the heterogeneous level, writing instruction is focused on developing students' thinking to support an argument, use of evidence to support an argument, and ability to organize effectively. At the honors level, in addition to reinforcing these skills, teachers expect students to build more complex, nuanced arguments and to attend to matters of style.

Teachers recommend students for honors English based on criteria we have found to be reliable predictors of success. These criteria include:

- A proficiency with language, both spoken and written.
- An ability to compose a statement of argument and support it logically and fully with evidence from a text.
- A love of reading.
- The skill to read with insight, coupled with the maturity to consider a variety of points of view regarding a piece of literature.

In grades 10 and 11, English courses are offered at the Honors/AP (H), the Accelerated/ Enriched (AE), the College Preparatory (CP), and the College Preparatory 1 (CP1) levels. In grade 12, English classes are offered at the Honors/AP (H), Heterogeneous, and College Preparatory 1 (CP1) levels. Heterogeneous senior level courses are topic-based classes.

There are differences in the level of challenge in Honors, AE, and CP English classes. However, by its nature, English allows for more movement among levels. Whenever students develop strong reading, communication, and writing skills and demonstrate interest in the subject matter, as well as strong work habits, they can be successful in upper-level English courses.

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HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES

At R. J. Grey

Social Studies at the junior high consists of a seventh-grade American studies course, entitled *We the People*, and an eighth-grade course, entitled *Beyond the Single Story: Comparative Cultures*. Through a variety of sources, with special emphasis on primary sources, both courses encourage students to think critically, be respectful of differences and varied points of view, draw connections between history and the events of today, and be informed active citizens. Social studies classes at the junior high are heterogeneously grouped.

In Grade 7, students are first introduced to the concept of identity, a theme throughout the school year. They begin to understand the numerous factors that shape their own identities. Through this understanding, students coming to the junior high from many different elementary schools come to recognize similarities, differences, and shared interests with their classmates, providing opportunities for establishing connections and friendships. This understanding allows for a safe and respectful classroom environment that encourages multiple perspectives and points of view. It also helps create a sense of community throughout the school.

From individual identity, students will then begin to gain an understanding of national identity. As they develop map skills, they look at how the face of America has continued to change. Students study the founding documents – the *Declaration of Independence*, *Constitution*, and *Bill of Rights* – as the foundation of the “American Promise” of equality, justice, liberty and opportunity. Throughout the rest of the year, students ask themselves to consider to what extent we, as a nation, have lived up to those stated ideals for different people. How has the “We” in our *Constitution’s* “We the People” changed over time? Specific focus is on the historic experiences of women, African Americans, and immigrants in order to help students make connections to important political, social, and economic issues today.

In Grade 7, critical thinking skills are formally introduced and reinforced repeatedly throughout the school year. These skills include summarizing information to draw conclusions, making inferences, and using supporting

evidence. Students learn to actively read a variety of primary and secondary sources. Organization and study skills are also emphasized. These skills are reinforced and built upon in Grade 8.

The eighth-grade curriculum reinforces the environment of respect established in Grade 7 and begins the year by exploring our “cultural lens” and the impact it has on one’s view of the world. The essential question – “What is the danger of a single story?” – helps guide the curriculum. Its primary focus on just two cultures, those of Iran and China, allows the many layers of these cultures – geography, literature, belief systems, history, the arts, politics and current events – to be uncovered and more deeply understood. Throughout both units, students consider the themes of power, the legacy of the past, and the influence of ideology.

Critical thinking and student skills introduced in seventh grade are further developed in eighth grade. We also continue to focus on geography and developing map skills as a way for students to be able to better understand the connection between place and society. A new 21st-century skill, identifying a credible source, is introduced and practiced as well. This skill is integral in navigating the online world of eighth graders. At the end of the school year, students apply these skills as they independently research one of four countries: Chile, India, Russia or South Africa, to identify and understand how the themes of power, history, and ideology impact the culture of the country researched. Lastly, students present their research to their classmates, ensuring that they all learn many “stories” about these four cultures.

At ABRHS

Many considerations guide level recommendations in social studies courses: strength as a reader and writer, enthusiasm for subject matter and willingness to embrace independent work are key examples. Additionally, students’ willingness to take initiative in the learning process, to add to class discussions, and to seek assistance when needed are important factors.

Students take a three-year social studies core curriculum, which begins with World History and continues with a two-year sequence of U.S. History and Government. This configuration addresses topics and skills in world history not addressed in earlier education. It also allows for an in-depth consideration of the development of the American governmental system and central documents such as the Constitution. The core curriculum is offered at the H/AP, AE, CP, and, in some cases, CP1 levels. In the 9th grade, the World History course is also offered through the Transition Program, by teacher recommendation only. For grades 10-11, the core courses are also offered at the CP1 level, which offers a more individualized approach to the curriculum. Overall, the chronologically sequenced units and overarching themes are consistent across levels. The major differences across levels are the amount of reading required, the expectations regarding written work, the level of detail and abstraction that students must handle, and the degree to which teachers scaffold the learning process.

When 8th grade staff make level recommendations, they evaluate students’ demonstrated abilities in reading and writing. In addition they will consider students’ consistency of performance, their ability to organize and synthesize materials and thoughts, their degree of independence, and their level of enthusiasm for the subject matter.

Leveling decisions in social studies are flexible and try to reflect students’ interests and needs in a given year. Students may successfully move from a lower-level course to a higher-level course from one year to the next, so long as they possess the reading and writing skills – plus the enthusiasm and time – to support a more-detailed and abstract approach to work. In addition, some of the electives offered to older students require different skill sets from the core required courses, which allow students to experiment somewhat with leveling options.

A special option exists for sophomores: American Studies AE. Team-taught by a social studies teacher and an English teacher, the history and English classes are taught during two contiguous periods. Although the curriculum includes the same major units from the two disciplines that students would encounter in “regular” sophomore English and social studies classes, the American Studies faculty is also able to illustrate American history through works of literature. Conversely, English teachers are able to place their literature offerings in a

larger and more complete historical context. Class work – including presentations, tests, and field trips – can be more flexibly scheduled.

Sophomores, juniors, and seniors may opt to take Genocide and Conflict Resolution (unleveled but with an honors option), a course that addresses the Holocaust, factors associated with genocide in general, and approaches toward reconciliation. Also available to grades 10-12 is a new course called Understanding Race (also unleveled with an honors option), which explores racial identity, case studies in race and racism, and local issues around race and racism. Beginning in the junior year, students may select from a wide variety of elective courses offered by the department. Leveled courses include Psychology (H/AP seniors only, AE and CP juniors and seniors), European History (H/AP seniors only), and International Relations (H seniors only). Non-leveled courses include the year-long Economics class and semester classes: You and the Law, Political Science, Psychology and the Good Life, and Sociology. The leveled electives typically require considerable reading and research and/or integration of concepts. The non-leveled courses also involve analytical reading and writing, but in addition, they focus on current events and projects. Consequently, appropriate course selections reflect a combination of individual skills, available time, and enthusiasm.

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SCIENCE

The science curriculum 7–12 encourages students to utilize the process of scientific inquiry to discover and interpret scientific knowledge. The curriculum is designed to support a variety of teaching strategies, including cooperative, peer, and project-based learning; lecture; group discussions; and audio-visual presentations. Throughout all grades and courses, we emphasize the laboratory as a focal point for learning.

At R. J. Grey

In the 7th and 8th grades, all science classes are heterogeneously grouped. The 7th- and 8th-grade science curriculum promotes conceptual and skill development, as well as student interaction. A range of topics in physical, biological, earth/space, and environmental science is taught; in addition, the curriculum aims to explore the interrelationships between disciplines. Our junior high science program introduces the students to myriad scientific themes and topics, imparts the fundamentals necessary for a successful transition to the 9th grade, and prepares them for the 8th-grade MCAS exam.

At ABRHS

The graduation requirement for science is three years of science, one of which must be biology. The core courses of Environmental Science, Biology, Chemistry and Physics are aligned with the Massachusetts Science and Technology/Engineering Curriculum Framework [STE] and are defined as “lab-science” classes. The science curriculum is designed so that students will engage in the process of science through scientific inquiry and application of the underlying scientific concepts. Students will use qualitative as well as computational thinking to analyze and interpret data. They will develop the necessary skills to generate and interpret qualitative and quantitative data, evaluate scientific claims, and provide evidence for scientific conclusions. The sequence of skill development is designed for students to typically progress from Environmental Science to Biology to Chemistry to Physics.

The 8th grade science teachers will recommend students for AP Environmental Science, H Environmental Science or Environmental Science. These full year courses meet daily for one period per day and will all have a

significant lab component embedded into the class. Biology will no longer be offered for 9th grade students. Explorations in Visual Arts and Science is a half year, every other day course that is also available for 9th grade students who are interested in exploring data collection, analysis and various modes of expressing that data. Science Academic Support is an alternate day class offered for students who may need additional support specifically in science. It is staffed by a certified science teacher and is available to any student in any of the science classes.

The Program of Studies provides details for all of the science course offerings.

Science Course Offerings

<u>9th Grade</u>	<u>10th Grade</u>	<u>11th Grade</u>	<u>12th Grade</u>
AP Environmental Sci H Environmental Sci Environmental Sci Transition Env. Sci	H Biology AE Biology CP Biology	H Chemistry AE Chemistry CP Chemistry	Physics (H/AP, AE, CP)
	H Chemistry AE Chemistry CP Chemistry	CP Physical Science CP1 Physical Science	Physical Science (CP, CP1)
	AP Environmental Sci	AP Environmental Sci	AP Environmental Sci
		AP Biology (2 nd year course)	AP Biology (2 nd year course)
		AP Chemistry (2 nd year course)	AP Chemistry (2 nd year course)
		Anatomy and Physiology (Semester)	Anatomy and Physiology (Semester)
		Bioethics (Semester)	Bioethics (Semester)
		Explorations in Visual Arts & Science (Alt. day)	Explorations in Visual Arts & Science (Alt. day)
		Project Based Engineering (Semester)	Project Based Engineering (Semester)
		Anatomy and Physiology (Semester)	Anatomy and Physiology (Semester)
		Marine Biology (Semester)	Marine Biology (Semester)
		Science Research for Publication (Alt. day)	Science Research for Publication (Alt. day)

Explorations in Visual Arts in Science (Alt. day)			
Science Academic Support (Alt. day)			

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WORLD LANGUAGES

Acton–Boxborough students typically begin their formal language studies at Raymond J. Grey Junior High School, where they elect French or Spanish in grade seven. It is a two-year program, equivalent to Novice French I or Novice Spanish I at the high school. The curriculum is designed for the middle school student by allowing more time for practice, hands-on activities, games, music, and cultural experiences. The students will learn the rudiments of the language that they have selected, while developing an appropriate proficiency level in the three communicative modes: Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational. Seventh and eighth graders study language as a core subject on their junior high team.

1. By the conclusion of their junior high language studies, students who have demonstrated appropriate proficiency in the three communicative modes (Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational) in grade eight are ready to continue their language study in Intermediate French I or Intermediate Spanish I at Acton-Boxborough Regional High School. Grade eight students transition well into the recommended course since the Intermediate French I and Intermediate Spanish I programs build upon the R.J. Grey Junior High curriculum, and teachers in both buildings work collaboratively to properly sequence language learning from grades seven through twelve.
2. At Acton-Boxborough Regional High School, most students will continue their language of choice from the junior high. They also have the option of beginning the study of another or of “doubling up” by starting an additional language, may it be French, Spanish, Latin, or Chinese. (See #4, below, and *Potential Sequence of World Language Courses*, on page 16.) *Grade eight students who would like to elect two languages for their freshman year* should plan their schedule carefully with their grade eight counselor, since carrying six classes can be demanding.
3. *For students who have not met with success in their junior high language studies (those who have earned a final grade of 69 or lower in grade eight)*, world language teachers will recommend Novice French I, Mandarin Chinese I, Latin 1, Novice Spanish I or Novice Spanish II at the high school. With added maturity and the further development of study, organizational, and/or language skills, these students may indeed be successful at the high school.
4. *Students who have not begun their language studies in junior high* also have options for beginning their studies at ABRHS (see *Potential Sequence of World Language Courses*). In an effort to meet the different needs of our beginning language learners, the department offers several options for studying first-year Latin, French, Spanish or Chinese.

For students who prefer to study a classical language that focuses on reading, grammar, vocabulary and Roman culture, the department offers **Latin**.

Latin I is an introductory course for the novice language learner. This course has been designed to move at a medium pace as they learn to read and write Latin through a variety of methods and strategies. Focus areas will include grammar, prefixes, suffixes, word roots, Roman history, and Roman culture.

For students who prefer to study a modern language that focuses on listening and speaking, as well as reading, writing, and culture, students may elect French, Spanish or Chinese.

Novice French I is an integrated approach to language learning that includes the study of grammar. This course teaches the equivalent of two years of junior high language instruction in one year. It is recommended for those with strong language skills – that is, for those with grades of B- or higher in their English courses.

Novice Spanish I, which is open to all language learners, is an integrated approach to language learning that includes the study of grammar. This course teaches language learning at a moderate pace. Slower-paced instruction and repetition help the students to acquire vocabulary and structure. Students begin to speak, read, and write Spanish by understanding, re-telling, expanding, revising, and creating stories, dialogues and visual presentations. Novice Spanish I students will continue at this moderate pace in Novice Spanish II.

Chinese I is an integrated approach to language learning that includes the study of grammar. It is an introduction to spoken Chinese, using the Pinyin system of Roman letters. Students learn to converse simply and are introduced to the writing of Chinese in simplified characters. Students will begin to develop an appreciation of Chinese culture that will better prepare them to interact in a global society.

To determine which language offering best meets the needs of a student initiating new language study at the high school, a junior high student should meet with the Junior High World Language Department Coordinator in the spring of grade 8 for a course recommendation.

Once at the high school, students will progress through language courses as indicated in the *Potential Sequence of World Language Courses* chart. World language teachers will recommend an appropriate course and level for their students. World language students are not “tracked”; there are many instances of students who move to a higher or lower ability-level grouping throughout their sequence of language studies. However, due to the building-block nature of language learning, it becomes increasingly difficult to move to a higher ability level after year two of language study. In addition, there are some courses that are sequential in curriculum content (Novice Spanish Novice Spanish II; Spanish II CP III CP; Spanish IV CP V CP; French II CP III CP; Spanish III AE IV AE; French III AE/IV CP IV AE/VCP). Therefore, a teacher would not generally recommend that a student progress, for example, from II CP to III AE. Even when a teacher does recommend that students move to a higher ability level (generally 2CP to 3AE or 2AE to 3H), students should prepare themselves for the next course with study over the summer in order to avoid any gaps in the understanding of structure or mastery of vocabulary.

A frequently asked question is: “How many years of language study are required for graduation from ABRHS?” The answer is two years, beginning with the class of 2024. Many colleges have entrance requirements in world languages. For example, the Massachusetts Board of Regents of Higher Education has established a minimum requirement in languages for admission to the four-year state colleges and universities: two years of one foreign language. Very competitive schools look for students who have studied one language in depth – i.e., for four or five years. Students are advised to consult particular colleges of interest for their specific admission and placement requirements in order to keep their options open.

All ABRHS world language students will have opportunities to participate in Exchange Programs, Community Service activities, and study/travel abroad when offered. In addition, ABRHS offers students some opportunities that they may not have had before. For instance, students may access the digital multi-media language laboratory, not only as part of their language class but also outside of class for individual practice.

In recognition of achievement in language studies, the high school supports local chapters of the National French, Latin, Spanish, and Chinese Honor Societies. Recipients of our outstanding course achievement awards

in each level are recognized at the end of the school year. We also have the Seal of Biliteracy, an award given by a school or district in recognition of students who have studied and attained proficiency speaking, reading, and writing in two or more languages by high school graduation. A bill to establish a state seal of biliteracy was signed by Governor Baker in November of 2017. This seal as attained by students in their senior year provides evidence to universities and businesses that students have attained proficiency in a second language, an important 21st century skill.

Students are eligible to apply for the Seal of Biliteracy in their senior year. Students will participate in the administration of a proficiency test and may earn a silver seal for intermediate-mid language proficiency, a gold seal for intermediate-high proficiency, and a platinum seal for advanced-low language proficiency.

Potential Sequence of Courses for Students

Keeping in mind that students each have their own unique needs, many factors are considered when placing a student in the appropriate level:

Grades: A grade of 70 or higher is required to continue to the next year.

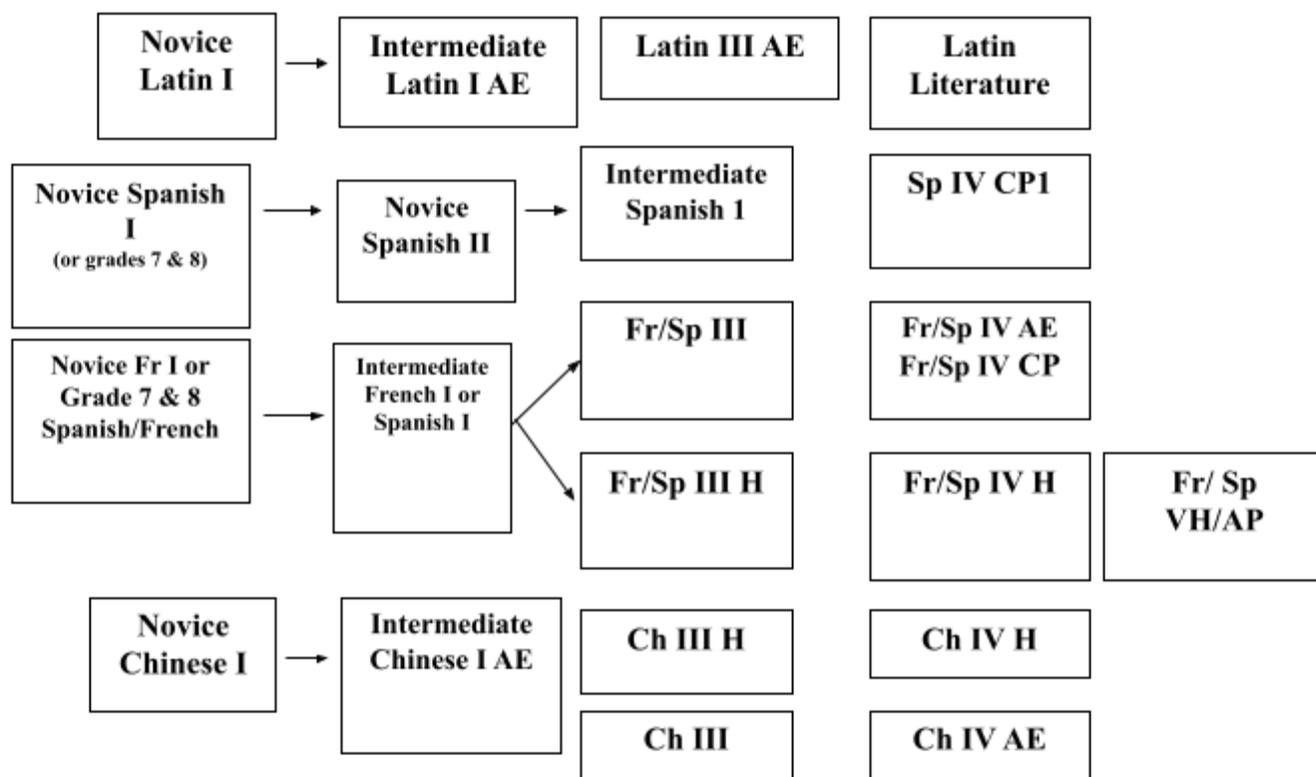
For placement after first year of language at high school the following is used as a guideline for recommendations:

- Honors: 90-100
- Accelerated/enriched level: 80-89
- College preparatory class: a 70 or above.

In addition to this criterion of grade achievement, teachers will take into consideration the following criteria:

- a) Growth in proficiency including interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational skills
- b) Retention and use new vocabulary and expressions
- c) Facility with learning and using new grammar and verbs
- d) Self-discipline and motivation towards second language expression

The school district's program is, of course, only the beginning. The long-term goal of our grade seven through twelve program is that our students use and enjoy their world languages beyond the confines of the Acton-Boxborough School District. Our intent is to offer them an excellent start toward this end.



For further information, please contact:

Ms. Sinikka Savukoski, High School Department Leader

ssavukoski@abschools.org

Mr. Matt Wirzburger, Junior High Department Coordinator

mwirzburger@abschools.org

The Following Disciplines Are Not Leveled, but Many Courses Have Prerequisites

PERFORMING ARTS DEPARTMENT

Within the Performing Arts Department, courses are not leveled. A wide range of students will be involved in these courses; for example, our band will have a range of musicians from beginner to highly advance. The band director is able to assign parts that will suit all students' needs and abilities.

At R. J. Grey

The following junior high school courses are taught pass/fail and have no prerequisites:

- Grade 7 Chorus
- Grade 8 Chorus
- Grade 7 Music – Exploratory
- Grade 8 Drama – Exploratory
- Grade 7 Orchestra
- Grade 8 Orchestra
- Grade 7 Band
- Grade 8 Band

The following junior high school programs have some entry requirements.

- √ Dramatic productions are offered as an after-school activity. Open auditions are held for all interested students.
- √ Jazz Band is offered as an after-school activity. Woodwind/Brass/Percussion players must be enrolled in band/chorus/or orchestra. Piano/Bass/Guitar will be selected by audition.
- √ Select Choir is offered as an after-school activity. Students must be members of the chorus/band/or orchestra program to participate.

At ABRHS

The following high school Performing Arts courses have no prerequisites or requirements:

- Band
- Orchestra
- Color Guard
- Choral (un-auditioned, grades 9-12)
- Music Theory
- Electronic Music
- History of Rock & Roll and Contemporary Music
- Acting I
- Drama: Improv
- Theater Games
- Playwriting
- Introduction to Technical Theater
- Audio-Visual Media Technology (listed under Career Exploration in the Program of Studies)

The following high school courses have some kind of prerequisite or requirement:

- √ Jazz Band (by audition only) Woodwind/Brass/Percussion players must be in band. Piano/Bass/Guitar by audition
- √ Bella Voce (treble voices, grades 9-12 by audition only)
- √ Madrigal Singers (grades 9-12 by audition only)
- √ Advanced Theater Production
- √ Acting II (Acting I) (offered every other year)

For further information, please contact:

Mr. George Arsenault, Director of Performing Arts, K-12

garsenault@abschools.org

VISUAL ARTS DEPARTMENT

Philosophy

The Visual Arts program is designed to nurture students' development as visual learners, foster a lifelong appreciation for the visual arts, and lay a strong foundation for participation in the 21st century's thriving "creative economy." The Visual Arts program offers 28 courses that span a wide variety of traditional and digital media, two and three-dimensional art forms, and industrial arts. Central to all this are the "Studio Habits of Mind." These include the abilities to:

- **Develop Craft:** Practice and apply artistic techniques using selected tools and materials.
- **Engage and Persist:** Understand that art making involves problem-solving, practice, and perseverance.
- **Envision:** Visualize and plan as part of their art making.
- **Express:** Create artwork that conveys meaning, ideas, feelings, and personal meanings.
- **Observe:** Look at the world around them and consider aesthetic possibilities and ideas.
- **Reflect:** Contemplate and articulate ideas about their art making and the art making of others.
- **Stretch and Explore:** Experiment, take risks, and explore ideas in their art making.
- **Understand the Art World and Creative Economy:** Learn about past and current practices in the arts and Creative Economy and share their work with the broader community.

At R. J. Grey

All grade 7 and grade 8 students are required to take an Art Exploratory each year: Art 1 in grade 7, Art 2 in grade 8. The units of study in these courses explore a wide variety of art mediums such as drawing, painting, hand building with clay plus many more diverse art experiences. In addition, seventh- and 8th grade students may choose from a selection of trimester-long visual art electives. While most of the high school art courses focus on a specific media, the R.J. Grey program provides a broad experience so that students may make informed choices when they get to high school.

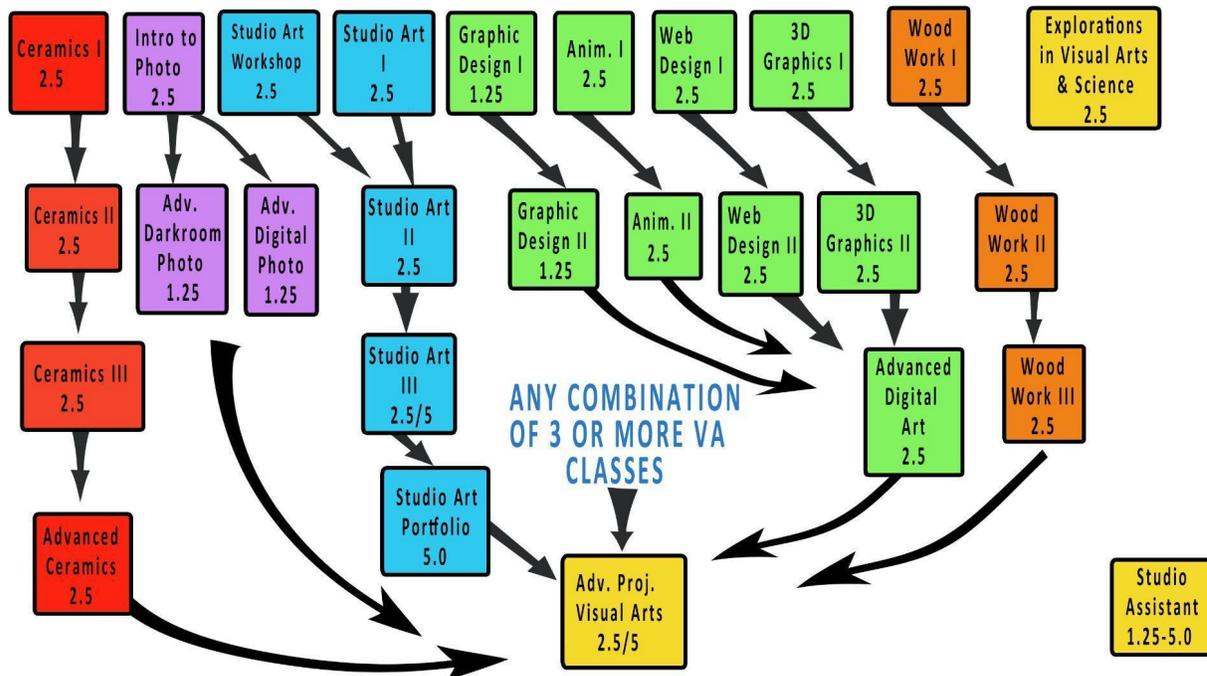
R. J. Grey Visual Arts Courses, 2022-23

- Art 1 Exploratory: Grade 7 – every other day, ½ year (*meets for 45 class periods*)
- Art 2 Exploratory: Grade 8 – every other day, ½ year (*meets for 45 class periods*)
- Art Elective: Grades 7 and 8 – every other day, ⅓ year (*meets for 30 class periods*)

At ABRHS

The Acton-Boxborough Regional High School Visual Arts program offers 29 courses that span a wide variety of traditional and digital media, two- and three-dimensional art forms, and industrial arts, as well as interdisciplinary approaches.

AB VISUAL ARTS PATHWAYS 2022-23



ABRHS Visual Arts Courses, 2022-23: [Please see the Visual Arts Program of Study for detailed course descriptions.](#)

Ceramics

- Ceramics I
- Ceramics II (*prerequisite: Ceramics I*)
- Ceramics III (*prerequisite: Ceramics II*)
- Advanced Ceramics (*prerequisite: Ceramics III*)

Digital Art

- Graphic Design I
- Graphic Design II (*prerequisite: Graphic Design I*)
- Web Page Design I
- Web Page Design II (*prerequisite: Web Page Design I*)
- Animation I
- Animation II (*prerequisite: Animation I*)
- 3D Graphics I: Modeling and Animation
- 3D Graphics II: Animation and Video Games (*prerequisite 3D Graphics I*)
- Advanced Digital Arts (*prerequisite: Graphic Design II, Web Design II, Animation II, or 3D Graphics II*)

Industrial Arts

- Woodworking I
- Woodworking II (*prerequisite: Woodworking I*)

- Woodworking III (*prerequisite*: Woodworking II)

Photography

- Introduction to Photography
- Advanced Darkroom Photography (*prerequisite*: Introduction to Photography)
- Advanced Digital Photography (*prerequisite*: Introduction to Photography)

Studio Art

- Studio Art I
- Studio Art II (*prerequisite*: Studio Art I)
- Studio Art III (*prerequisite*: Studio Art II or Illustration)
- Studio Art Portfolio (*prerequisite*: Studio Art III or Illustration)

Other Visual Arts Courses

- Advanced Projects in Visual Arts (*prerequisite*: at least three visual arts courses and/or 7.5 credits)
- Explorations in Visual Arts and Science (dual credit in Visual Arts and Science)
- Studio Assistant (with faculty recommendation)

For further information, please contact:

Mr. Leo Muellner, Director of Visual Arts, K–12

lmuellner@abschools.org

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Our vision in the Acton-Boxborough schools is that all students will understand, appreciate, and engage in a healthy and active lifestyle.

Our mission is to provide a progressive and comprehensive Health and Physical Education program through high-quality, research-based instruction. Students will develop skills and knowledge through a wide variety of learning experiences in a safe environment. Students will also learn how and why they should keep themselves healthy and physically active throughout their lifetimes. Instruction will emphasize physical fitness and skill application, critical thinking and decision-making, sportsmanship, and cooperation.

At R. J. Grey

All 7th and 8th grade students are required to take health and physical education. Students attend as a team that is divided into a rotation that divides the year evenly. During both the health rotation and the physical education rotation, students follow the curriculum articulated on the R. J. Grey website.

At ABRHS

Grade 9

All grade 9 students follow the Fitness for Living course, which consists of:

- One quarter in the fitness center.
- One quarter lower gym, fitness circuits, cooperative games, and other group games.
- One quarter of health topics.
- One quarter swimming.

Grades 10, 11, and 12

- All grade 10, 11, and 12 students are required to take one semester, i.e. two quarters, of physical education –

the equivalent of half a year.

Choices

- ~ Competitive Team games/sports: softball, speedball, tennis, ultimate Frisbee, soccer, disc golf, speed Minton, volleyball, flag football, floor hockey.
- ~ Lifetime Fitness activities: Fitness center, water aerobics, aerobics, step aerobics, yoga, Pilates, resistance band training, body bar strength training, outdoor walking/running, outdoor fitness circuits.
- ~ Health/Physical Education combination: A mix of physical activities and classroom health lessons.
- ~ Lifeguard training/certification/water skills for life. [Students who are not interested in the certification may still take the course.]
- ~ Yoga and Fitness: This is a mix of yoga, strength, endurance, and fitness education.
- ~ Advanced yoga and Fitness: This class expands on the yoga and fitness class, but is not a prerequisite for it.
- ~ Theater and Dance PE: This class is a mix of Dance and fitness activities for all students.
- ~ Soccer Referee/certification/and Fitness: [Students who are not interested in the certification may still take the course.]

*** Some of the electives are offered on an every other year basis.

For further information, please contact:

Mr. David James, Director of Health and Physical Education, K-12

djames@abschools.org



Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools

NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions, age, active military/veteran status, ancestry, or national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, employment policies, and other administered programs and activities. In addition, students who are homeless or of limited English-speaking ability are protected from discrimination in accessing the course of study and other opportunities available through the schools.

Any person having inquiries or complaints concerning the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District's compliance with Title VI, Title IX, Section 504, ADA or MGL ch. 76, sec.5 is directed to contact the Assistant Superintendent for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Administration Building, 15 Charter Road, Acton, MA, telephone number 978-264-4700, x3265, who has been designated by the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District to coordinate the District's efforts to comply with these laws, or write to:

Office for Civil Rights

J. F. Kennedy Federal Building, Room 1875

Boston, MA 02203

or

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Office of Program Quality Assurance Services

75 Pleasant Street

Malden, MA 02148