



*Acton-Boxborough Regional School District*

16 Charter Road

Acton, MA 01720

978-264-4700 [www.abschools.org](http://www.abschools.org)

# **RJ Grey Junior High School**

**Acton-Boxborough Regional School District**

## **School Improvement Plan for 2016-2017**

## School Council Membership, 2015-2016 School Year

<u>Name</u>	<u>Role</u>	<u>Year of Term</u>
Andrew Shen	Principal, School Council co-chair	NA
Kerry Byrne	Junior High Teacher	2nd of 2-year term
Lana Paone	Junior High Teacher	2nd of 2-year term
Carol Watson	Junior High Teacher	2nd of 2-year term
Tracey Smith	7th grade parent	1st of 2-year term
Susan Kenyon	7th grade parent	1st of 2-year term
Joanne Wu	8th grade parent	2nd of 2-year term
Sarah Webber	8th grade parent, co-chair	2nd of 2-year term

### 2015-2016 School Council Meeting Dates:

(for minutes and handouts of individual meetings, please go to: <http://rjgrey.abschools.org/school-council>)

October 25, 2015

November 9, 2015

December 14, 2015

January 25, 2016

March 14, 2016

April 25, 2016

June 6, 2016

**Goal One:** Continue to develop and enhance the Junior High curriculum through ongoing emphasis on literacy in all subject areas and continuous refinement of curricular sequencing and pacing to reflect overarching District goals that are associated with, but not limited to, literacy.

**Background and Rationale:** Consistent with the District's priorities, the Junior High remains committed to the notion that addressing literacy is fundamental to students successfully engaging with content knowledge, and that content is essential to assisting students develop key skills in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, listening and critical thinking. This initiative is entering its fourth year, and specific goals and objectives for the upcoming year will need to be established to encourage the ongoing evolution of this work as it relates to professional training and learning materials. As the District continues to examine and review both specific and general dimensions of our preK-12 curriculum, the Junior High will continue efforts and adjustments that are appropriately responsive to changes that contribute to that work.

**Strategies:**

- Continue the Junior High's **Disciplinary Literacy** initiative, entering **Year 4** of this work that emphasizes professional development and curriculum development. Provide staffing support, learning material support, necessary release time, and outside consultation as needed
- Continue to support the work of the 2nd cohort of staff involved in the *Disciplinary Literacy* initiative, as they enter Year 2 of their work and studies
- Continue to support the work of the 1st cohort as they enter their 4th year with this initiative
- Continue to work with evaluators to identify key aspects of literacy work that should be incorporated into educator evaluation observations
- Support **7th grade Math** program's plans to adopt and utilize a new math textbook
- Support the **World Language** department's ongoing efforts to shift towards a proficiency model for supporting and guiding student mastery of French or Spanish
- Work closely with District administrators in their review of curriculum goals, and addressing questions related to individual student and family interest in **accelerating exposure and/or access to various academic courses and programs**
- Incorporate District work with **Challenge Success**, and data and feedback gathered through the process, to lend insight into our review and of course goals and pacing

**Outcomes:**

- *Expanded* implementation of effective literacy strategies within the classroom by RJ Grey teacher evidenced by new interdisciplinary endeavors between Science, Social Studies, and English
- Teacher-led and designed practices that reflect disciplinary literacy work evidenced by at least two additional professional learning sessions organized and led by teaching staff (as opposed to administrators)
- Increased dialogue about literacy strategies between teachers and their evaluators, as evidenced in evaluation write-ups
- Continued refinement and clarity of District approach and response to interest in various types of academic acceleration, resulting in formal documentation and protocols for this issue
- Successful implementation of the new 7th grade math textbook and supplemental student materials, including utilization by all math teachers of web-based materials associated with the textbook
- World Language has met goal for Year Two of its implementation of a proficiency model for student engagement in French and Spanish, which includes clear documentation of benchmarks and assessment goals for student performance in both grades

**Goal Two:** Continue to enhance and develop academic supports for students within our “High Needs Population” who would benefit from additional intervention and/or adult engagement in order to experience academic success (continuation from previous four years -- ‘12-13, ‘13-14, ‘14-15, and ‘15-16).

**Background and Rationale:** As a school, and by many different measures, we continue to provide an educational experience that supports a high level of academic achievement reached by many of our students. To be sure, it is crucial that we continue to preserve aspects of RJ Grey that support this level of academic achievement. In addition, we continue to feel an obligation to pay increased and sustained attention to the needs of RJ Grey students who continue to struggle academically and/or whose personal and educational circumstances calls for specialized instruction. There will always be students who may not experience immediate academic success at RJ Grey, and we are committed to expanding the number and scope of interventions that we provide for them. This has recently included a growing population of general education students who join our school district with significant learning gaps and varying degrees of preparation for grade-level instruction. We also continue to have students who experience serious interruptions to their academic work and would benefit from additional supports. Some examples of “interruptions” include the increased frequency of students diagnosed with concussions, long-term illnesses, and struggles with anxiety and school refusal.

Additionally, our population within the Special Education and ELL cohorts is increasing in both size and complexity of needs. RJ Grey is expecting its Special Education population to increase by at least 25% over the next two years. We are fortunate to have received additional staffing for next year in the form of two full-time special educators, which will allow us to implement new models that address individual Learning Center populations, as well as overall special educator caseloads. Additionally, it provides us with the bandwidth to introduce other intervention strategies in the area of reading support, social pragmatics, and executive function. Efforts for 2016-2017 will focus heavily on development and implementation of this new model, and the interventions that accompany that model.

#### **Strategies:**

- Support and encourage ongoing professional development for specific teachers that targets **new and expanded reading intervention strategies**. These opportunities will include summer and school-year trainings.
- Continue to prioritize and fund other professional learning opportunities and summer work that streamline, improve, or expand our work and communication related to students who receive **additional academic support** (general education or special education)
- Adjust the **caseload and teaching responsibilities of our Reading teacher** to offer a wider array of reading services to our incoming population, both general and special education
- Continue our school’s **examination of homework practices**, including shared homework guidelines that will be piloted this school year. Include professional learning sessions that focus specifically on strategies for modifying and adjusting homework assignments for students who consistently struggle with homework completion and mastery of content
- Incorporate District work with **Challenge Success**, and data and feedback gathered through the process, to lend insight into our ongoing work in this area
- Introduce additional intervention strategies in the areas of **reading support, social pragmatics, and executive function**
- Implementation of **new Learning Center model** that addresses learning center sizes and overall special educator caseloads
- Continue to work with Student Support Services to review **District approach to determining eligibility, and in-class and school-wide interventions** to provide students before considering a referral for special education testing

**Outcomes:**

- Increased reading services to students in our general and special education populations that address their specific areas of need (i.e. decoding, fluency, etc.)
- Increased implementation by classroom teachers for modifying and adjusting homework for students who consistently struggle with homework completion
- Implementation of new intervention strategies in areas of reading support, social pragmatics and executive function. Ongoing review of those new strategies to identify areas to adjust or modify moving forward
- Sharing of strategies and resources to classroom teachers on effective in-class intervention strategies that can and should be implemented in advance of considering a referral for special education testing

**Goal Three:** Continue to attend to efforts that address the social and emotional health of our students, including expansion of extra- and co-curricular programming, and professional learning for staff on critical aspects of student well-being and safety.

**Background and Rationale:** The social and emotional health of our students has been highlighted as a priority within our District for several years. This issue covers a wide range of issues and concerns, ranging from ensuring that a broad range of student extracurricular interest is met and supported, to the emergence of stress-related problems and challenges within our student population. As populations in our two communities continues to shift and change, there is reason to believe that some of our offerings and strategies for engagement and support may need to be adjusted to reflect these changes. Additionally, the Superintendent's recent *Entry Report* highlighted a number of topics that fall within this realm (school start times, stress, extracurricular and co-curricular programming) and merit some attention. To that end, our District will be devoting significant attention to concerns around the continued narrowing of how "success" is defined, and the intensity of expectations and competition that seem to play an increasingly prominent role in the experiences of our students.

#### **Strategies:**

- Adoption of **ALICE** for our school's threat response protocol
- Implement the first full year of the **JH Community Service** recognition program
- Continue our school's **examination of homework practices**, including shared homework guidelines that will be piloted this school year. As part of that discussion, continue to discuss the topic through the lens of student health and wellness
- Support and champion the District's work with **Challenge Success**, including professional development for staff, community dialogues and presentations for parents/guardians, and gathering feedback from students about their current experiences (i.e. re-administer the Challenge Success student survey)
- Continue to support the continuation and **development of student clubs and activities**, including ones with a health and wellness focus
- Implementation of a new **String Ensemble** program as a Grey Block elective
- Creation of an **RJ Grey community vegetable garden** that utilizes unused courtyard space within the Junior High, and provides opportunities for students, parents, and staff to work together on a garden that could also be linked to curricular activities and lessons
- In concert with the District's master plan for school spaces, continue to identify options and opportunities within the existing Junior High footprint of **updating and improving current spaces** to include varied and flexible seating that encourages student learning and social interaction.

#### **Outcomes:**

- Complete staff and student training of ALICE protocol so that adoption of this response protocol will be in place by the end of September, 2016
- At least 25% of the student population will participate in our Community Service recognition program
- At least three community programs and presentations for parents/guardians related to our Challenge Success work and efforts
- Student clubs such as Cooking Club, Fit Club and Yoga will continue to be offered to students, as well as the emergence of new clubs based on student interest
- Incorporation of RJ Grey garden into various curricular and co-curricular programs at the Junior High
- Ongoing analysis and review of our shared homework guidelines and to assess impact on student experience and learning, evidenced through student surveys and feedback
- Additions and updates to various spaces such as the Library and Cafeteria lobby that expand the usage and seating options for those area
- Complete the inaugural year of the String Ensemble program, and identify any adjustments for the following year

**Goal Four:** Establish and/or refine specific aspects of RJ Grey school operations that include day to day protocols as well as procedures and policies for special events and programs.

**Background and Rationale:** Both by choice and necessity, the 2016-2017 school year will involve work and attention to various operational dimensions of the school. This includes areas of school procedures that have been identified by the staff as requiring greater attention and clarity, ranging from our approach to special events and activities, to supervision of, and access to, school space after school. This goal is also in response to new practices or requirements established by Acton-Boxborough and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and require immediate attention on the part of the Junior High.

**Strategies:**

- Gather and synthesize all information available from the DESE regarding the creation of **MCAS 2.0** as the new statewide assessment system, and any changes that will be required in terms of timing, coordination of testing, accommodations, and use of technology
- Participate in a District review of **protocols and policies for any overnight school field trips** (such as the Washington D.C. trip)
- Review with Central Office administration needs and concerns regarding **open access to Junior High building during after school hours**
- Discuss with staff and Central Office administration **new models for Junior High department and school leadership** that may replace current Department Leader model; identify most critical needs that any leadership model must meet moving forward
- Review with other schools their approach for **maintaining and sharing student records**, and working closely with Central Office and district legal counsel to identify clear guidelines pertaining to student records

**Outcomes:**

- Successful transition of testing protocols and procedures to administer the Spring 2017 version of MCAS 2.0 statewide assessment, including test security, student accommodations, and technology requirements
- Establish a shared District policy and protocol regarding overnight field trips that addresses eligibility to participate, questions concerning liability, medical provisions and services, and funding of required accommodations
- Establish a new policy and procedure for addressing access of Junior High space after school that continues to encourage appropriate student use of spaces and programs, while increasing and improving necessary safety and security of the space and its users
- Design and propose a new leadership model for the Junior High that will be potentially implemented in 2017-2018 (may require a funding request)
- Identify most critical areas where schools within the District must share practices related to student records and begin a review of Junior High protocol to ensure compliance with those expectations





## Assessment of 2015-2016 Progress on School Improvement Plan

**Goal One:** Continue to develop and enhance the Junior High curriculum with an emphasis on supporting literacy in all subjects.

**Outcomes/evidence and means by which they were assessed:**

Status	Outcomes	Notes/Highlights
<b>MET</b>	Continue the JH's <i>Disciplinary Literacy</i> initiative, entering Year 3 of this work that emphasizes professional development and curricular development. Provide staffing support, learning material support, necessary release time, and outside consultation as needed.	4 all-school staff meetings devoted to this topic; implementation of Learning Walks; Math Department professional learning sessions with consultant
<b>MET</b>	Continue to support the first cohort of staff involved in the <i>Disciplinary Literacy</i> initiative	This group continues to meet as a Critical Friends Group and is currently discussing interdisciplinary opportunities for the 2016-2017 school year
<b>MET &amp; Ongoing</b>	Launch work with 2nd cohort of staff accepted into the <i>Disciplinary Literacy</i> initiative.	This group met during the summer, and also participated in 4 professional days during the school year and have begun establishing goals for the 2016-2017 school year
<b>Ongoing</b>	Work with evaluators to identify key aspects of literacy work that should be incorporated into educator evaluation observations and discussions.	This expectation was established during the school year; ongoing calibration amongst evaluators will be a necessary next step for 2016-2017
<b>Ongoing &amp; Adjusted</b>	Continue to support department-based curricular development that addresses alignment of course units with items emphasized within the Common Core and the upcoming PARCC assessments.	With the shift by the DESE in its anticipated use of PARCC, we continue to pay attention to the Common Core but await additional guidance about the new "MCAS 2.0" instrument for next year
<b>MET</b>	Implementation of new <i>Digital Literacy</i> course during the 15-16 school year	This 7th grade course was offered this year, and will be entering its second year of implementation; the Digital Literacy teachers presented to the staff in May 2016 an overview of the grade-level goals and objectives for their courses
<b>Ongoing</b>	Evidence of continued and expanded implementation of effective literacy strategies throughout JH classrooms, including but not limited to those involved in the <i>Disciplinary Literacy</i> initiative	Six (6) teachers presented at all staff meetings of lessons and teaching strategies they have recently implemented as a literacy strategy; department leaders have been asked to embed dialogue about literacy strategies into their observation follow ups with teachers
<b>Ongoing</b>	Evaluations of educators will include observations and commentary on his/her implementation of instructional strategies that directly addresses our school's literacy goals	This has begun, and requires continued calibration amongst evaluators of how best to pursue this effort



**Goal Two:** Continue to enhance and develop academic supports for students within our “High Needs Population” who would benefit from additional intervention and/or adult engagement in order to experience academic success (continuation from 12-13, 13-14, and 14-15).

**Outcomes/evidence and means by which they were assessed:**

Status	Outcomes	Notes/Highlights
<b>MET</b>	Implementation of new model for expanding ASC supports and general education (and special education) reading services	Shifted new FTE to provide additional bandwidth for ASC, new FTE staff person supported 7th grade team and additional reading support for identified students
<b>MET &amp; Ongoing</b>	Utilization of new Educational Team Leader position to provide increased coordination of services for Special Education students, including transition from elementary schools to the Junior High	Ongoing development of new protocols and practices that maximize use of newly created ETL position. ETL has continued to meet with elementary SPED coordinator to choreograph transition of students to JH. ETL has implemented several efforts to establish greater cohesion within the JH Special Education department, and mentoring new staff to the Junior High. This will continue, especially with three new staff members joining next year.
<b>MET</b>	New structure to provide Fundamentals Math and English instruction for Special Education students	Existing staffing was structured to serve as the instructor for both Fundamentals English and Math, providing for more alignment in instruction for the students who are enrolled in those courses. This is a shift away from a model where 3-4 different special educators were assigned sections of Fundamentals Math or English
<b>Ongoing</b>	Include professional learning on instructional strategies and support for our High Needs population	This was not done as explicitly and as school-wide as we would like. Next year, we are devoting time to exploring strategies for modifying homework assignments for struggling students, as well as other more specific topics related to this area.
<b>MET</b>	Planning for 2016-2017 SPED population increase, developing budget and program proposals to increase and align staffing to properly anticipate needs for the following school year	We were able to present budget proposals for the upcoming school year that includes 2 additional FTEs for the Special Education department based on projections for SPED student enrollment over the next few years. With School Committee support, we are moving forward with staffing and programming that will allow for appropriate services and support of our incoming student population.
<b>Ongoing</b>	Development of modified and accessible curricula in the different content areas, including but not limited to, 7th grade Math, English, Social Studies and Science that can be used to support students in our LLP and Connections (special education) programs where there is an increasing cohort of students who require substantial modifications and adjustments to the curriculum	This continues to be an effort that is heavily pursued in the summer with professional learning sessions attended by content-area teachers and special educators who support students in our LLP and Connections program. Last summer, the focus was on the 7th grade curriculum.
<b>Ongoing</b>	Continue working with teams to develop team-based strategies for intervention and “catching” students who are struggling; continue to emphasize classroom-specific modifications and supports that can and should be offered to individual students.	This is a dialogue that continues within team meetings, Child Study discussions, and embedded in other professional learning topics such as Homework and Disciplinary Literacy.



**Goal Three:** Continue to attend to efforts that address the social and emotional health of our students, including expansion of extra- and co-curricular programming, and professional learning for staff on critical aspects of student well-being and safety.

**Outcomes/evidence and means by which they were assessed:**

Status	Outcomes	Notes/Highlights
<b>Not Met &amp; Delayed</b>	Implement a structured and formal program at the JH that encourages students to participate in community services activities, and recognizes them for their involvement in those activities.	This initiative was delayed by a year, and we plan to implement in the Fall of 2016. Some initial preparation was completed, and we will plan to launch in October.
<b>MET</b>	Offer a school trip to Washington, DC for interested students, that would take place during the April Vacation.	Over April Vacation, 100 RJ Grey students and 10 chaperones participated in a 4-day educational trip to Washington DC. We hope to offer this trip again in the future.
<b>MET</b>	Continue to support the development of new student-initiated clubs and activities that generate appropriate levels of student interest	Many student clubs continue to be offered annually, such as MathCounts, Speech Club, Chess & Board Games, and Origami Club. Newer clubs such as Fit Club, Yoga, Iron Chef Cooking Club, and Remote Control Club were offered this year with great interest and participation.
<b>MET</b>	Provide professional learning for staff on crisis response situations that address aspects of grief counseling and supporting students who experience traumatic experiences and loss	We had training specifically for our school leadership and crisis response team, and then an all-staff training with Maria Trozzi, the Director of the Good Grief Program. The crisis response team continues to meet and conduct table-top exercises to prepare for different scenarios that may require utilization of our crisis plan.
<b>Ongoing</b>	Continue to evaluate and assess the structure of our anti-bullying and teasing program, and identify possible additions or modifications	We continue to utilize the MARC program for our pro-social anti-bullying curriculum. We supplement that with speakers regarding online bullying and also performing arts-based programs that address peer to peer conflicts. We continue to modify content that can effectively reach students.
<b>MET</b>	Support the work of our performing arts staff at the JH and HS, as they implement a new schedule for each school's respective musicals and theatrical performances	We successfully shifted the timing of our annual JH musical to the Fall season, with performances taking place immediately after the Thanksgiving Break.
<b>MET &amp; Ongoing</b>	Engage staff, families, and students in continued study and dialogue about sleep, extracurricular commitments, as part of the District's examination of school schedules and start times.	For the first time, we had sleep expert Dr. Kirsty Kerin speak to all 7th and 8th grade students in separate presentations. We also supported the District's larger efforts to explore concerns around sleep and school start times - via District surveys and the November professional learning session.
<b>Ongoing</b>	As part of our discussion about homework, examine that topic through the lens of student health and wellness	We held 4 all-school staff meetings to discuss homework practice, and had two subcommittees develop a homework purpose statement, and an initial draft of shared homework guidelines.
<b>Not Met &amp; Delayed</b>	Adoption of new school lockdown/threat response protocol (i.e. ALICE Training as a possibility), and initial training associated with that protocol	This was not pursued during this current school year. The District moved to adopt ALICE as the protocol for our schools and initial training for a cohort of staff will be completed in May 2016. It is likely that full adoption and training will be ready for the start of the 2016-2017 school year.

