



Acton-Boxborough Regional School District
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Superintendent of Schools

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome back to our families with students returning to our wonderful school system! For those families with children just beginning at one of our nine schools, welcome to these terrific communities.

As you can imagine, there has been an amazing amount of activity behind the scenes since school ended in June to prepare for the start of another school year. From hiring new staff, to cleaning buildings, closing out budgets, ordering supplies and resetting schedules and student lists etc. the list is long! My sincere gratitude goes out to everyone who worked tirelessly over the summer to help prepare for us to welcome back students and staff next week.

I would like to highlight a number of key areas of focus that our entire community should be aware of for the new school year.

First, in addition to providing a robust academic program, we continue to make a vital commitment to attending to the social and emotional well-being of the children and young adults whom we serve.

There are two primary areas that are unfolding within this realm:

- Last spring we announced our plans to partner with a nationwide research and intervention program that aims to reduce unhealthy pressures on our youth by championing a shift in how success is defined and measured in our schools and communities. *Challenge Success*, based out of Stanford University, represents a deep commitment on our part and we are excited about joining the many other schools in this state and across the country in this important work. Considerably more information will be forthcoming in the weeks ahead but in the meantime I would recommend visiting their website at www.challengesuccess.org to learn more about their focus and our pursuit. One important event in conjunction with this effort is the planned visit to the district by Dr. Denise Pope, one of the founders of *Challenge Success*, on November 8. Dr. Pope will meet with staff during the day and our parent/guardian community in the evening to share information connected with their research.
- In June, the *Superintendent's Wellness Committee* delivered the report of their year-long effort that examined sleep and sleep deprivation in the context of school start times. This very thorough report can be found at <http://www.abschools.org/district/school-start-times> and was well received by the School Committee. The Administration has now been asked to explore the possible options that might facilitate future changes to our current start times in detail. This notion of changing school start times later in the day for our young adolescent students is gathering nationwide attention and is a complex issue that is more complicated than it might seem.

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

Second, as you know, we have begun to update our District's Strategic Plan. In June I circulated a multimedia presentation that provided a glimpse of a set of proposed draft statements in support of our evolving vision, mission and core values. Over 800 people responded to these statements via a survey and, on behalf of the members of the entire District Leadership Team, I am extremely thankful for their participation. Later this year, we will propose a new set of strategic actions that will hopefully become part of the new plan presented to the School Committee for their ultimate approval.

Third, throughout the course of the 2015-16 school year, the District completed the first phase of our capital study aimed at examining our capital and infrastructure needs throughout our eight buildings. Otherwise known as the *Existing Conditions Study*, this work detailed an extensive list of capital improvement needs. The second phase of the study also began last year and is slated to culminate with a final report in November that will lay out a *District Master Plan*. This plan will identify a range of options for us that will be important to consider as we seek a path forward that is fiscally responsible and helps maintain our buildings and infrastructure over the long-term. Extensive information on all of this work including past reports and presentations may be found on the district's website at <http://www.abschools.org/district/school-capital-and-space-planning>.

Establishing strong and regular channels of communication between the district and our families remains something very important to me. As a reminder, the *district's website* – www.abschools.org includes a wealth of information and is updated regularly. There are also a number of district *Twitter accounts* including mine @SuperABRSD where I strive to include timely information about district events and activities including school closures, cancellations and delays.

Finally, a few important things to note as we get ready to launch the year:

- i) *Bus Schedules* will be finalized and posted on www.abschools.org this week. As always, we ask for your patience during the first few days as routes simply take longer due to many variables.
- ii) The full 2016-17 school year calendar with important dates is available on the district's website at <http://www.abschools.org/district/calendar>.
- iii) Early next week I will follow-up with additional information regarding changes to our school safety and security plans.

It is an honor and a privilege to serve the communities of Acton and Boxborough as we collectively support our young people to help shape, guide and develop our future leaders. Thank you for your trust, support and commitment in this work and I look forward to seeing you around 'AB' this year.

Yours in education,

Glenn A. Brand

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