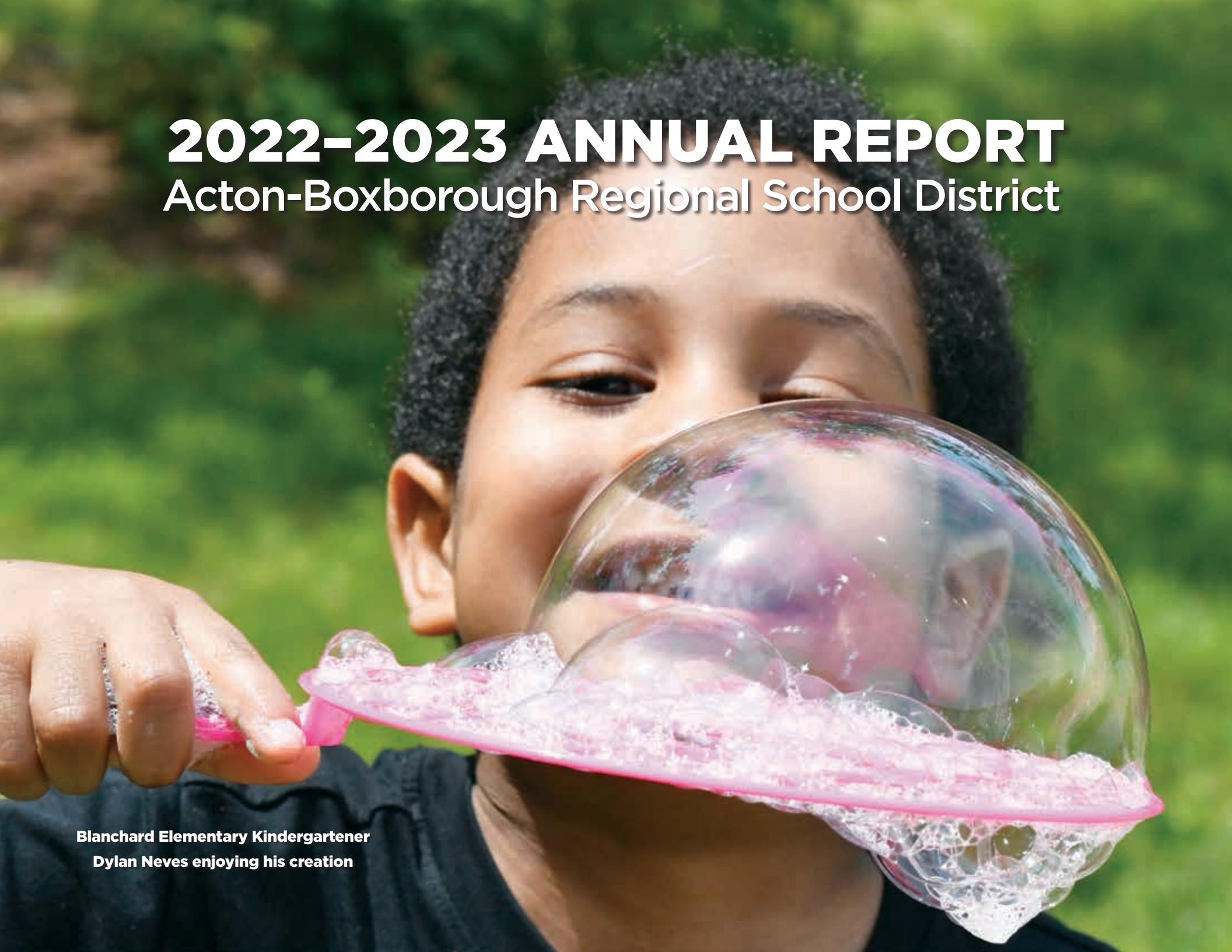


2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Acton-Boxborough Regional School District



Blanchard Elementary Kindergartener
Dylan Neves enjoying his creation



All photos provided by A-B schools
unless otherwise indicated.

Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee (2022-2023)

Evelyn Abayaah-Issah (BOXBOROUGH)
Ben Bloomenthal (ACTON)
Liz Fowlks (BOXBOROUGH)
Ginny Kremer (ACTON)
Amy Krishnamurthy (ACTON, VICE-CHAIR)
Tessa McKinley (BOXBOROUGH, VICE-CHAIR)
Adam Klein (BOXBOROUGH)
Andrew Schwartz (ACTON)
Yebin Wang (ACTON)
Rebeccah Wilson (ACTON)
Kyra Wilson-Cook (ACTON, CHAIR)
Contact Us: abrsc@abschools.org



Central Administration

Peter Light (SUPERINTENDENT)
Marie Altieri (DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT)
Deborah Bookis, Ed.D
(ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING)
Jennifer Faber
(DIRECTOR OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION)
Andrew Shen (DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL PROJECTS)
Jennifer Truslow (DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION)
Amy Bisiwiecz (DIRECTOR OF EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY)
David Verdolino (DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND OPERATIONS)
Erin Bettez (DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION)

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15 Charter Road
Acton, MA 01720
978-264-4700

SUPERINTENDENT'S WELCOME

ACTON AND BOXBOROUGH COMMUNITY,



With the daily challenges of COVID squarely in our rearview mirror, we were able to turn our full attention to helping our students recover from the pandemic. As any of our educators, families, or students can attest, the pandemic took a toll on our students. This past year was about returning schools to normalcy and making sure that we support students' social-emotional and academic recovery from several years of disruption.

We undertook several important initiatives to support students' social-emotional needs and mental health:

- We provided training to our educators K-12 in **trauma-informed care**. This training helps educators to proactively create environments in schools and classrooms that support students who have experienced traumatic events or conditions.
- We introduced and expanded **advisory programs** in the junior high and high school. These programs allow educators and students to meet regularly in small groups to focus on relationships and a sense of belonging.
- To improve students' access to mental healthcare, we partnered with **Cartwheel Care**, an innovative organization that guaranteed access to counseling services within five days of referral.

Academically, we focused on improving students' literacy and mathematics outcomes through our tiered system of support. At the elementary level, this involved having our educators work together to look at student learning data and make sure that additional support was provided for students who needed it.

We also continued to focus on making sure all of our schools create a strong sense of belonging for our students. Similar to what has been reported in the news at both the state and national level, our district saw incidents of hate and bias at unacceptable levels over the last two years. This year, we brought together a coalition of students, families, staff and community members to discuss this troubling trend and plan activities in our community that can interrupt this pattern and shift our culture to one that values a fundamental respect for human differences.



Another highlight of the year is that we were able to successfully complete five administrative searches! We are delighted to welcome the following individuals to their new roles:

- **Andrew Shen**, Deputy Superintendent of Schools
- **Sheri Matthews**, Director of Finance and Operations
- **Tricia O'Reilly**, Principal of the Luther Conant Elementary School
- **Larry Wolpe**, Principal of the C.T. Douglas Elementary School
- **Christina Gavin**, Principal of the Merriam Elementary School

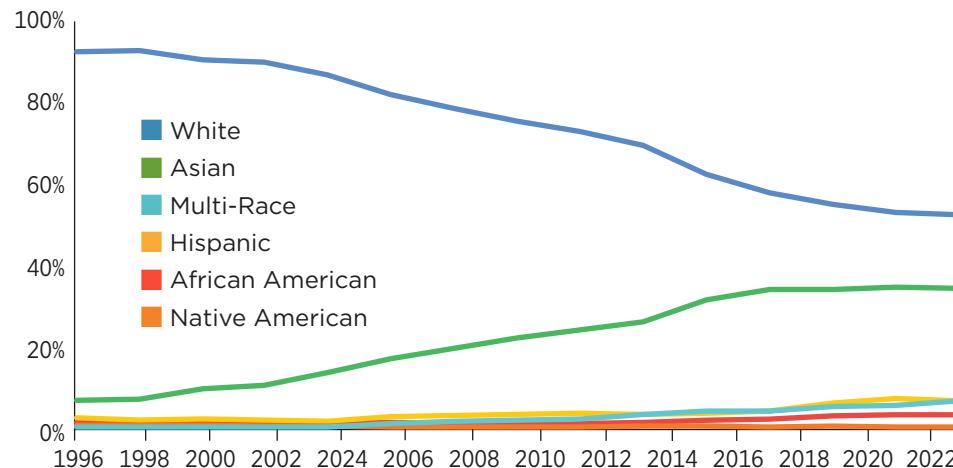
I am grateful to the citizens of Acton and Boxborough for unanimously passing the school budget at the town meetings earlier this year. It is gratifying to work in a community that demonstrates such unified support for the schools. It is also important to note that this year marks the second consecutive budget for the schools where we had to make difficult reductions to staff. Pressures from inflation and rising costs, along with limited revenue, will continue to be a challenge for our schools and we will need to pay careful attention to this in the coming years.

I want to end by thanking our educators and staff for all of their work over the last year. They remain extraordinarily committed to our students and families and are truly the backbone of our district.

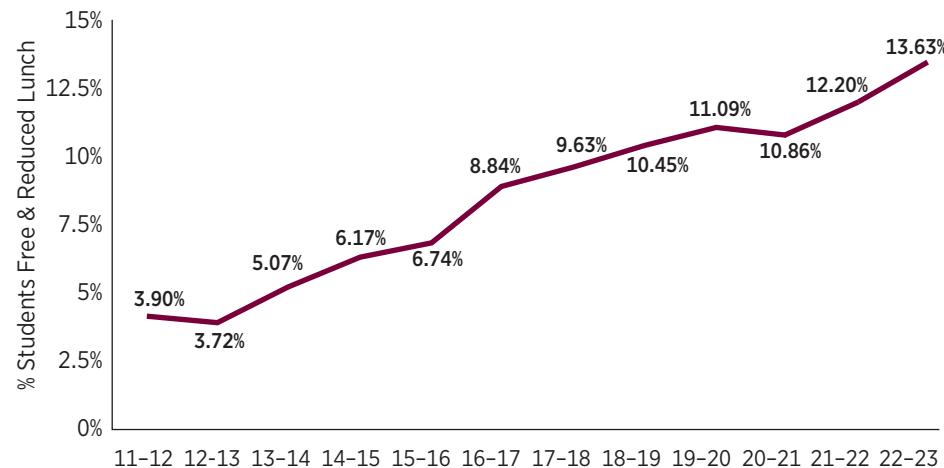
Peter Light
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Demographics at a Glance

Student Population by Race, 1996-2023



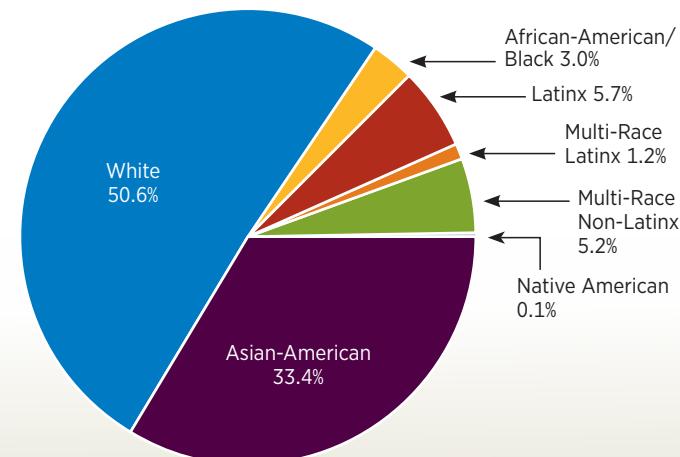
Students Eligible for Free & Reduced Lunch



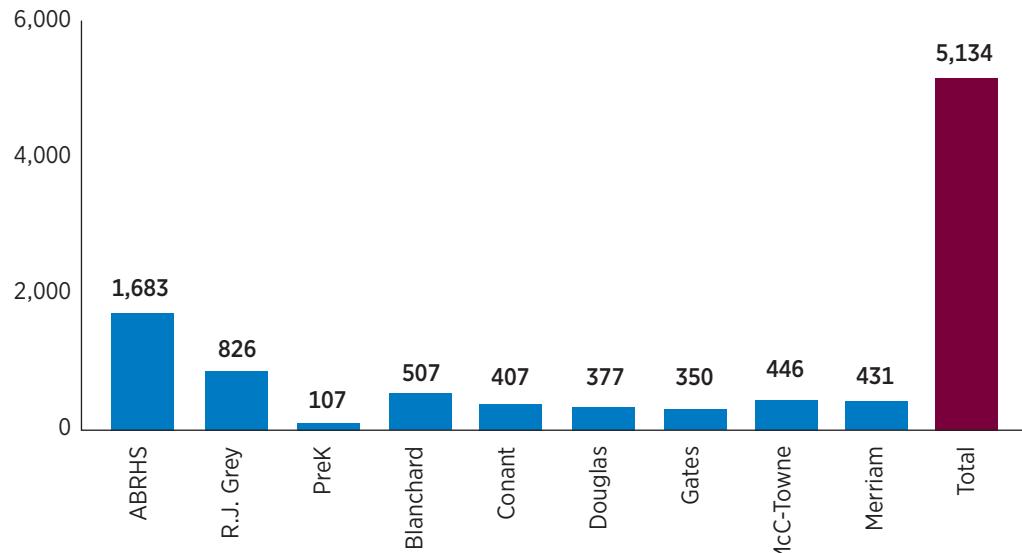
The charts and graphs included on this page are intended to provide you with a general overview of our student and family population during the 2022-2023 school year. Where helpful, we have also included data that provides perspective about the change over time that Acton-Boxborough has experienced in terms of the demographics of our continually evolving community.

Please note that the graphic that illustrates the shifts in our student population by race between 1996 and 2023 comes from the Cleargov.com website. If you are interested in reviewing the information that is highlighted by Cleargov about our district, please visit: <https://cleargov.com/massachusetts/school/acton-boxborough>.

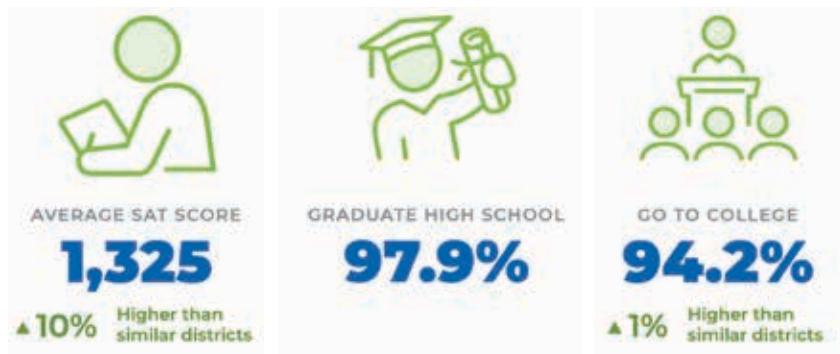
2022-2023 Student Enrollment by Race



2022-2023 Enrollment by School



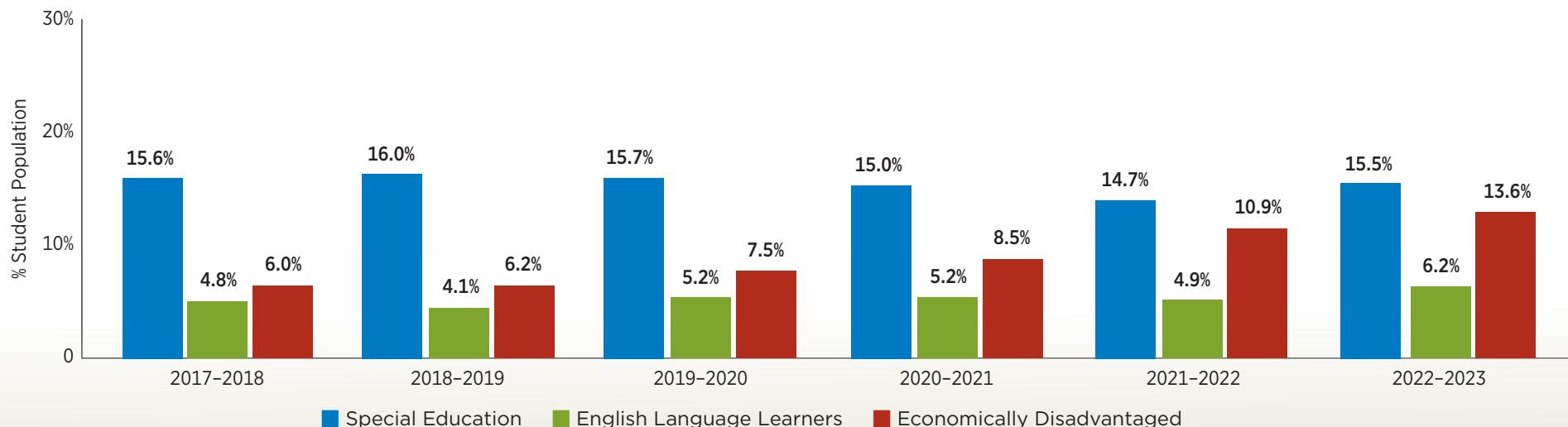
2022-2023 Performance Overview



Students at A-B continue to perform at levels that are at or above those of schools across the Commonwealth. Our District continues to place importance on supporting all students in identifying post-secondary opportunities that meet their interests and aspirations.

(SOURCE: CLEARGOV.COM)

Student Sub-Group Populations 2017-2023



District Finances at a Glance

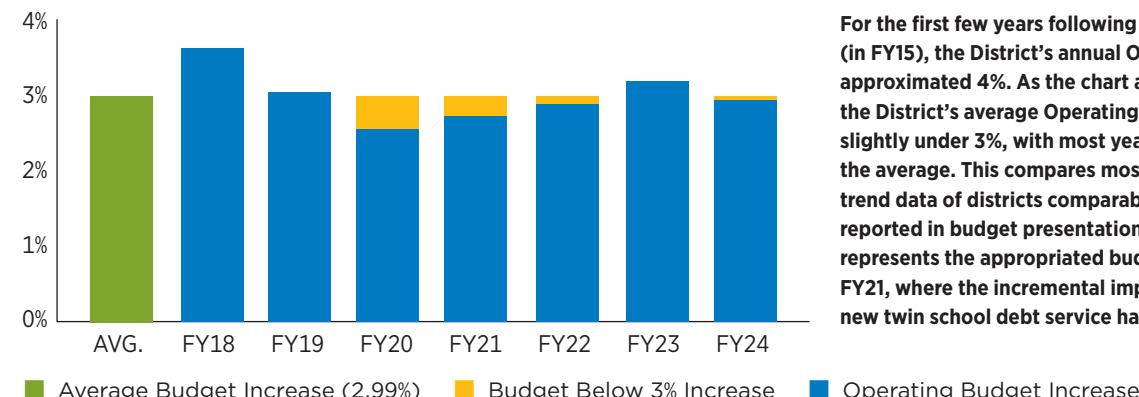
FY23 Financial Highlights

- Chapter 70 (Minimum) Education Aid increased to \$60 per pupil (versus \$30); represents \$150K revenue variance.
- Interest rates on invested funds increased to over 5%; projected investment income is over \$750K for FY23 (versus \$65K in FY22).
- In the aggregate, District expects a turn-back of ~\$1M (consistent with historical averages), to replenish E&D (\$1.375M budgeted use in FY24).
- Details of yearend budget-to-actual results will be presented in the preliminary FY23 financial report to School Committee (August, 2023).

FY24 Budget

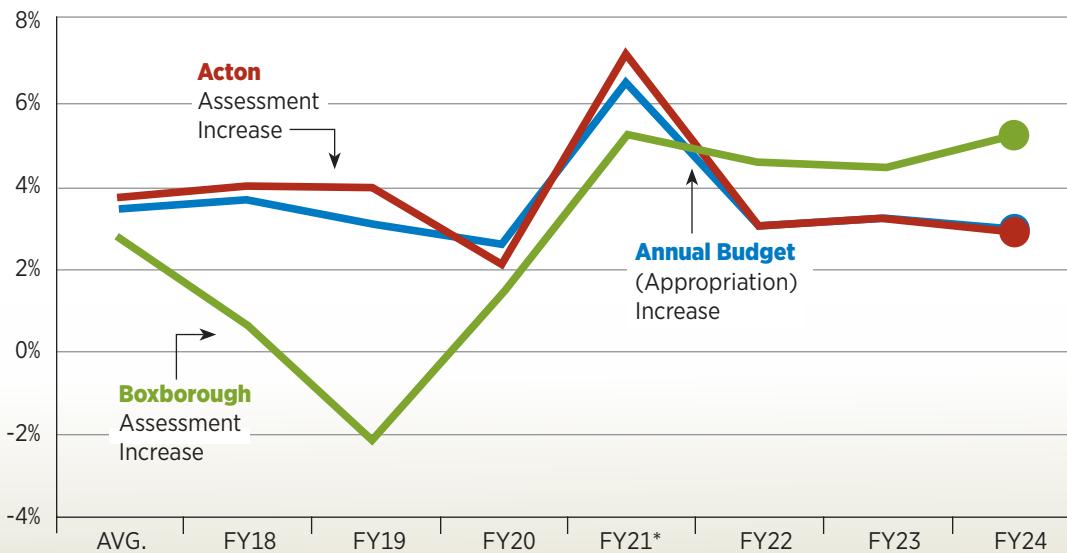
- Both towns have voted approval of the District's FY24 operating and capital budget (\$105.9M), an increase of 2.9% over FY23.
- Modest increases in some revenues (from sources other than the regional assessment); decrease in budgeted use of available District reserves.
- Boxborough's FY24 assessment increase (5.2%) is greater than Acton's (2.8%), due to Boxborough's relative proportion of K-12 enrollment.

Annual Operating Budget Growth (%)



For the first few years following full regionalization (in FY15), the District's annual Operating Budget increase approximated 4%. As the chart at left shows, since FY18 the District's average Operating Budget increase has been slightly under 3%, with most years increasing by less than the average. This compares most favorably with similar trend data of districts comparable to A-B, as has been reported in budget presentations. The Operating Budget represents the appropriated budget for all years except FY21, where the incremental impact of the first year of new twin school debt service has been excluded.

Budget/Assessment Trends



Due to its significantly greater relative enrollment, Acton's assessments track closely with the District's annual budget increases. Prior to FY22, Boxborough benefitted from the "cost shift" during the first seven years of full regionalization. Since FY22, and projected to continue for years beyond FY24, Boxborough's assessment increase exceeds the annual operating budget. Assessments are calculated based on the most recent three-year average of total enrollment for both towns.



Financial Outlook

TOP TEN BUDGET CHALLENGES OF FY24 AND BEYOND

1. Declining revenues from the state and other non-assessment sources.

With declining enrollment forecasted, A-B may never receive the benefit of increased state aid from the Student Opportunity Act (FY24 is year 3 of 6)

2. The end of pandemic relief grants and the need to reduce or eliminate some programs and incorporate over \$1 million of new costs into the District budget.

A-B funded numerous post-pandemic programs with infusions of Covid-related financial relief; but post-Covid learning, social-emotional challenges remain

3. Continued need for funding of critical infrastructure improvements.

Attention must be focused on funding the renewed Capital Improvements Plan (CIP), which may require added debt issuance, particularly to take advantage of rebate opportunities

4. Limited ability of Acton to increase revenue under its Prop. 2½ levy limit.

Recent budget experience (annual increases of under 3.0%) may not be sustainable for many more years in the future

5. Health insurance rates increased by 20% over the last two years.

Despite significant rate increases, the Health Insurance Trust Fund is not as healthy as is targeted and may require continued increases

6. Disproportionate increases to Minuteman Tech. High School, due to uncontrollable budget and enrollment issues.

Acton students' increased participation at Minuteman has not been fully factored into the assessment formula

7. Reductions of over 30 staff positions over the last two budget cycles.

The cuts will impact the District's ability to provide services; additionally, turnover and restructuring of senior leadership poses a challenge to implementing A-B's Strategic Plan

8. Identification and funding of special education services.

The District has had success (from a purely financial standpoint), minimizing the need for high-cost, out-of-district placements, which may be difficult to maintain

9. Balancing of the District's reserves and replenishment will be difficult.

Reducing reserve usage has been an ambitious, but largely unmet goal; and maintaining historical turnback levels face the challenge of tighter budgets

10. Achieving the goal of eliminating All-Day Kindergarten tuition.

Staff costs historically covered by tuition would be added to the budget

Teaching and Learning

EARLY LITERACY

Building on last year's elementary literacy work, a 23 member Reading Task Force representing all schools, grades and roles partnered with [Hill for Literacy](#) to begin reviewing evidence-based literacy programs. These programs were chosen to complement A-B's early literacy fundamental skills programs.

In the fall of 2022, members of the Task Force met with Hill for Literacy to better understand their review tool. This resulted in the addition of several culturally responsive and social and emotional components so that it was better aligned to our District's short and long term strategic initiatives.

By December 2022, the Task Force thoroughly researched and reviewed five core programs. They selected two programs and then invited all elementary staff to take part in another round of review, which occurred throughout the winter. This process provided an opportunity for every educator to contribute their assessment of the programs. In the early spring, publishers were invited to meetings to respond to educator questions. In April, a final decision was made based on the results of input from educators. The District will begin to [implement EL Education in grades K-6 in the 2023-2024 school year](#). The purchase of this program was supported by a \$200,000 award to the District through a Department of Elementary and Secondary Education competitive grant. A Literacy Implementation Team of educators and building and district leaders, continued professional learning, and feedback from all educators throughout the year will guide the implementation.

For the past several years educators have engaged in learning more about how we learn to read and also dyslexia. This year all elementary educators in grades K-3 participated in a workshop entitled, [Providing Targeted Support Through Small Group Instruction](#).

This workshop connected insights from the science of reading to the assessment of foundational literacy skills and planning effective instructional approaches. The workshop, Understanding and Supporting the Complex Nature of Reading Difficulties Including Dyslexia was offered to all educators K-6 through our professional learning program. The District Literacy Coordinators, Coaches and Specialists also participated in a research-practice seminar on structured literacy intervention.

[Fundations](#), [DIBELS \(mClass\)](#), and decodable book workshops also took place throughout the elementary schools. The Elementary Teaching and Learning Team participated in a series of DataWise workshops to enhance capacity of using data for instructional decisions. Workshops and research-practice seminars are complemented with ongoing, embedded professional learning—coaching—by our school-based Literacy Coaches.

Keeping families informed of the literacy work and how best they can support literacy learning in elementary school is a vital aspect of our collaboration and engagement. Last year, a team of educators created grade level (K-6) English and translated Literacy Guides for families and caregivers. These guides are posted on our District site and include the literacy milestones, at-home activities to support literacy learning, resources, and a glossary for each grade. The Literacy website also includes sections on child-friendly apps, reading

for pleasure resources, and general caregiver resources. This spring, a family survey was sent to ask what families want to know more about and how best to learn about literacy. One of the ways cited was a website (currently under construction) with a new section that will explain how we teach reading, the instructional materials/programs used, and the shifts in literacy instruction.

MTSS

A [multi-tiered system of support \(MTSS\)](#) was implemented in each of the elementary schools this year. The key components of MTSS include universal screening and progress monitoring tools; a problem solving process to analyze data, plan for interventions, and monitor student progress; a tiered system of supports where every student receives core instruction and some students receive strategic or intensive instruction; and a collaborative team-based approach.

All of our elementary schools have a shared vision and are moving towards a robust MTSS model. They have implemented universal screening tools, structures for educator teams to engage in data informed practices that support equity and access, [a FLEX block for tiered instruction](#), and Instructional Leadership and Instructional Support Teams. We are beginning to see the impact of this work and these structures and are committed to remedying the challenges which include the amount of meeting time required for planning and instruction, scheduling and shared staff, schools at different entry and implementation stages, and the ongoing, differentiated professional learning for educators.



Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

CARTWHEEL CARE

This year A-B partnered with [Cartwheel Care](#) to improve students' access to community-based mental health services. Through a telehealth model, Cartwheel provides youth mental health assessments; short-term evidence-based therapy; medication evaluations; and clinical family guidance with no waitlists. Their experienced care team of licensed therapists and child psychiatrists exclusively serves Massachusetts schools. Over the 2022-2023 school year, A-B hosted a Cartwheel family webinar series covering the following topics: mental health in the digital world, positive screen-based relationships, executive function, resilience, and anxiety. Referrals to Cartwheel Care are made by the school's mental health staff. Over **200 A-B families** were offered services this year.

LIFTS

In the 2022-2023 school year, ABRSD partnered with the [Lesley Institute for Trauma Sensitivity \(LIFTS\)](#) to provide professional learning opportunities to certified staff PK-8. This aimed to enhance their understanding of the impact of traumatic experiences on student learning, academically and socially. Educators collaborated to integrate trauma-sensitive practices into classrooms and the school community.

Additionally, A-B collaborated with Lesley University to offer [graduate-level courses in trauma-sensitivity](#). The LIFTS graduate program consists of five courses, totaling 15 graduate credits, leading to a certificate in trauma and learning.



THE CASEL 5

To identify a framework for social-emotional learning (SEL) goals and objectives, A-B formed an SEL Competency Advisory Committee as part of its efforts to implement the Multi-Tiered System of Supports model. The committee was tasked to identify an SEL competency framework that would serve as a foundation for the district's initiatives. Grounded in the district's mission, vision, and values, the cross-disciplinary K-12 committee embarked on the task of identifying the key social-emotional skills that are essential to foster and develop throughout a student's A-B experience. Using these skills as a guidepost, the committee reviewed several SEL frameworks, ultimately resulting in the decision to adopt The CASEL 5.

CASEL has developed a comprehensive PK-12 framework widely adopted by schools across the country and frequently referenced as an educational resource by the Massachusetts Department of Education. The CASEL 5 addresses **self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making**. It applies across settings to all ages and cultural contexts, promoting social-emotional development and skills such as understanding emotions, regulating behavior, empathizing with others, building relationships, and making ethical choices.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

During the 2022–2023 school year, we proudly highlight the following initiatives and achievements undertaken in fostering a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion within our district.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHER LEADERS

In its inaugural launch, our goal was to expand teacher leadership focused on culturally responsive practices. Across the district, we were able to **identify 32 Culturally Responsive Teacher Leaders** with a range from two to five leaders at each school level. Through their work, these leaders supported the school administration in developing and implementing plans to support our goal of becoming a culturally responsive district, built their capacity as learners, received and provided professional learning, and were available to support colleagues as thought partners.

SEEKING EDUCATIONAL EQUITY & DIVERSITY

Founded in 1987 at Wellesley College by Dr. Peggy McIntosh, **Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity** (SEED) stems from the belief that teachers learn best from their peers, who become facilitators, fashioning their own professional development. SEED encourages teachers to learn from others' experiences of inequity in terms of race, gender, class, and other systems of oppression and privilege. SEED started in 2017 in our district and has **grown to 14 SEED Leaders**. SEED leaders guide colleagues in experiential, interactive exercises and conversations. SEED sessions cultivate spaces for self-learning and peer-sharing which is a necessary prelude to creating more inclusive learning

spaces and communities. All educators and administrators are required to participate in a SEED session.

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH RESOURCE CENTER

Recognizing the increasingly complex needs of families, a key priority for Acton-Boxborough Regional School District leadership was to create a central location where Acton and Boxborough residents can access school registration services (including language screening), alongside information about local community resources. **Special emphasis will be placed on assisting families with language barriers**, those joining the community from abroad, and families that would benefit from additional community-based services and support beyond those offered in the schools. Additionally, we have successfully developed a formal partnership with the Acton-Boxborough United Way to serve as a contracted service provider for the District to oversee and provide a range of identified services and supports.

DESE HATE CRIMES PREVENTION GRANT

We are pleased to announce that Acton-Boxborough Regional School District was awarded a **DESE Hate Crimes Prevention Grant of \$50,000**. This grant will enable us to implement programs such as the ADL World of Difference Peer Leadership model at the RJ Grey Junior High School, designed to prevent hate crimes and incidences of bias, and expand our access to additional educational opportunities. We are grateful for the support of DESE and look forward to making a positive impact through our work.



ACTON-BOXBOROUGH THE BOARDWALK CAMPUS

For the Douglas, Gates and the C. Huebner Early Childhood Program



We were extremely excited to welcome our students and families to the new Boardwalk Campus Building this fall. The new building, which houses the **Douglas and Gates Elementary Schools** and the **Carol Huebner Early Childhood Program**, was the result of over seven years of work and support from our community. We were pleased to invite all of our community members to the **Grand Opening Ceremony on Saturday, October 15, 2022**. The day included a short opening ceremony that featured our town and state leaders, and our staff and students. This building represents the commitment of the community to our schools and the students and families it serves, and it is a testament to the collaborative spirit present within our town.



THE
ACTON-BOXBOROUGH
REGIONAL SCHOOLS

Cordially Invites You to Join Us As We
Celebrate the Grand Opening of

THE BOARDWALK CAMPUS

Carol Huebner Early Childhood Program
C.T. Douglas School
Paul P. Gates School
75 Spruce Street, Acton

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2022
RIBBON CUTTING
CEREMONY, 9:30AM
followed by campus tours 10AM-12PM

A response from you is kindly requested so that we may ensure VIP
seating for you at the ceremony. Please reply to:
boardwalkopenhouse@schools.org





Carol Huebner Early Childhood Program (CHECP)

The **Carol Huebner Early Childhood Program (CHECP)** is a developmentally-based learning environment that provides each child with the opportunity to learn and grow at his or her own pace. Students with identified special education needs and those who are developing typically learn and play together.

The philosophy of the Carol Huebner Early Childhood Program is that:

- All children can be successful.
- All children can learn and develop.
- All children learn and develop at their own pace given their unique learning styles.
- All children learn through active exploration of their environments.
- All children learn through interaction with peers and adults.

- All children need a nurturing, predictable environment in which to grow and learn.
- Play is the foundation of a child's learning and development.
- All children learn best in an "inclusive," child-centered, developmentally appropriate environment.
- The role of adults is to support and facilitate each child's learning.

144 students were enrolled in the program by the end of the school year. This included students who were supported with drive-in related services for speech-language therapy, physical therapy and occupational therapy. Throughout the year CHECP staff also worked in collaboration with parents, area preschools and childcare programs and **provided 46 evaluations and over 50 observations, screenings and consultations** to support students and families in the community.

Some of the highlights of the year have been:

- The program moved from our two previous sites (Admin Building and Blanchard School) and is now in one location at the brand-new Boardwalk Campus.
- CHECP staff continued to prioritize **Outdoor Learning Time**. This included exploring nature and wildlife around the campus and participating in yoga on the boardwalk.
- Teaching staff continued to use the **Heggerty Curriculum** to help support students' phonemic awareness and early literacy skills.
- Preschoolers participated in specials (art, music, physical education, library) provided by Gates and Douglas specialists throughout the school year.
- After a couple of years of inactivity, the PTO was restarted and is now the **Carol Huebner PTA (Parent Teacher Association)**.

Joseph Gibowicz

EARLY CHILDHOOD COORDINATOR

Blanchard's STARR values

- Support
- Teamwork
- Attitude
- Responsibility
- Respect

Dana Labb PRINCIPAL

Mike Votto ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL



All Are Welcome is the theme at Blanchard! This year Blanchard focused on literacy screening and intervention, social-emotional and behavioral learning support, and improving student and staff sense of belonging by strengthening our culture and climate.

We hold daily morning meetings, monthly student-led community meetings, and cross-grade buddy partnerships. We host monthly **Community Coffee with families**, and with the support of our strong Parent, Teachers, Friends (PTF) board, we provide connections, enrichment, and learning opportunities through grants and events including our wildly popular and successful **PTF Fun Run**, **Hygge Day**, and **Kindergarten and New Student Socials, yoga, nature, science, archaeology** and more!

Highlights from this year:

- Staff participated in a monthly, guided book study using **Zaretta Hammond's Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain** to support our inclusive work.
- The **Blanchard Concert Band** earned a gold medal at the **Massachusetts Instrumental and Choral Conductors (MICCA)** Concert, performed at the Gold Medal Showcase Concert, and at Groton Hill Music Center's Concert Hall. Additionally, the Blanchard Brass and Wind Ensemble earned a gold medal (their 15th consecutive) at the MICCA.



- Our **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Family Advisory Committee** continues meeting monthly to educate one another and guide our efforts in equality and inclusion. This work includes how we can better support all the identities represented at Blanchard.
- Through existing funds, direct appeal, PTF funding, dine-out events, ticket auctions, substantial individual and group donations, and corporate matching, our community, has appropriated and/or **raised approximately \$121,000 since November**, towards our new inclusive and accessible playspace project; #Play24!
- Our **Festival of Cultures** included over a dozen tables hosted by families as well as student performances. Our PTF provides free access to events including the Fall Festival, Bingo Night, and the Fun Run.
- Our **Monthly STEAM Challenges** provided opportunities for hands-on learning across grade levels and encouraged all students to see themselves as scientists, engineers, artists, and mathematicians while introducing them to the engineering design process. Our first annual STEAM + Literacy Night brought together the entire community (students, staff, and families) to read, play, explore, experiment, and create together.

Conant

This year was the first, in the past few years, to feel like a “typical” school year. We welcomed back in-person activities such as **All School Assemblies**, **PTO Family Breakfast**, and **Conant Movie Nights** to excited and overwhelming participation from students and families. Our goal continues to emphasize support and challenge for all students as they grow into their most authentic selves—academically, socially, and emotionally.

- **Blue Ribbon Award**—Conant was one of four schools in Massachusetts to be honored with a Blue Ribbon School Award for overall academic excellence for progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups. Superintendent Light traveled with two of Conant’s teachers to Washington in November to accept the award.
- **MTSS**—Conant staff is implementing focused intervention blocks using universal assessment tools, progress monitoring, observational data, and more to enhance our targeted, and intensive instruction to develop identified areas of improvement.
- **Rebuilding Community**—Our school has celebrated opportunities to reconnect with families and caregivers in person including:
 - A fall Scavenger Hunt, well attended PTO Family Breakfasts, evening Movie Nights, the popular and successful Conant Carnival, our joyous **Polar Pride Field Day**, a variety of field trips, portfolio breakfasts, and cultural share projects inviting families into our learning spaces.
 - The student council has organized monthly **All School Assemblies** designed to highlight and celebrate our diverse student body through holiday and cultural observances. In collaboration with our music program, at each assembly individual students performed their practiced talents in music and dance along with a number of all school sing-a-longs.
 - We welcomed volunteers from the **Acton Senior Center** who read to our K and 1 students.
 - We participated in **March Madness book brackets**, and Read Across America Week.

Joe Russo

INTERIM PRINCIPAL

Allison Leahy

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

At Conant School:

- We believe that every person should feel valued and respected to enable belonging as well as meaningful teaching and learning.
- We believe that every individual is part of our community, and each person must take individual and collective responsibility to contribute to its success.





Lucia Sullivan
INTERIM PRINCIPAL

Lizbeth Feliciano
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL



COMMUNITY

We moved into the new **Boardwalk Campus** building and developed new routines and systems for every aspect of the school experience. Students quickly learned their way around and developed comfort in the space. The Douglas School Community enjoyed the opportunity to return to beloved school traditions in a new setting, some highlights included:

- The **21st Commemorative Peace Walk**, Representative 37th District Danillo Sena and State Senator Jamie Eldridge attended.
- **National Unity Day Celebration**.
- A return to the **Veterans Day celebration** with presentations by visiting veterans.
- Band and Orchestra concerts.
- PTO hosted the **Trunk or Treat, Celebration of Cultures** and an ice cream social!
- Students enjoyed a beautiful May day of fitness and fun at the FunRun.
- Memorial Day concert with songs sung by the whole school community as well as contributions by band and orchestra.
- We were able to welcome visitors to enrich our learning: **Eyes on Owls, Pumpernickel Puppets**, author **James Bruchac**, geochemist **Ethan Baxter**.

Douglas School believes every student should

- experience joy and wonder.
- have the opportunity to be brave.
- feel valued.
- be proud of the work they do.

- Live sixth grade musical performances of “Winnie the Pooh,” performed for the whole school and the preschool.
- **Douglas Day** celebrated physical education and wellness.

And new activities included:

- Staff worked together with **Student Council** to develop school wide expectations.
- Our first art fair showcasing work by every student.
- A student council was started in grades. 4-6. Students started a “**green team**” to reinvoke lunchtime composting and recycling, came up with ideas for Spirit Days and identified ways to ease the transition into the new building.

- Kids and staff worked together to create plans to embrace the new building while preserving the small community feel that everyone loves about Douglas.

CURRICULUM HIGHLIGHTS

- Developed a school-based Instructional Leadership Team.
- Created a schedule with an intervention block four times a week.
- Teachers began meeting regularly with reading/math specialists to analyze assessment data and plan aligned instruction.
- Coaches, specialists and other members of the Instructional Leadership Team worked with grade level teams to plan and implement interventions.





This year marked a significant milestone for **Paul P. Gates School** as we moved into our new building. This state-of-the-art facility has provided us with amazing opportunities to foster creativity and collaboration.

At Gates we celebrate the unique strengths and differences of each student. We recognize that diversity is a valuable asset, and we embrace the cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives that make up our school community. Through various initiatives, such as multicultural events, guest speakers, and curriculum, we promote understanding, empathy, and acceptance among our students.



Allison Warren
PRINCIPAL

Kate Worth
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Gates Core Values

- Generosity
- Acceptance
- Trust & Respect
- Enthusiasm
- Scholarship

Exciting highlights of the 2022-2023 school year:

- We celebrated the return of in person **All School Meetings** led by the student council. All School Meetings included student musicians, Artists of the Month, PE slideshows, and new school building updates from our **Green Team**.
- The **Gates PTO** sponsored many exciting events throughout the school year including family picnics, ice cream social, spelling bee, multicultural night, author visits, performances, and robotics night!
- A **Celebrate the Arts** night that showcased artwork by all students. Everyone enjoyed the performance of the combined Boardwalk Chorus.
- Teachers participated in professional learning about trauma-informed practices led by **Lesley University**.
- During our **first-ever STEAM week**, each class had the opportunity to visit the STEAM lab and participate in a range of activities, including scratch programming, coding, Bee-Bots, and other interactive STEAM experiences.



At McCarthy-Towne, integrated curricula stress cooperation, active participation, diversity of ideas, and experimentation. Teachers and students value the process of learning. Art integration is a primary vehicle for learning about the learning process. Children are responsible for learning independently, solving problems, and making decisions. We value including families and staff in the decision-making for the school and strive to center our diverse community with every decision for our students.

COMMUNITY

- Our PTSO hosted a **McHearty Party**, a World Heritage Day celebration, a movie night, and an end-of-the-year Art Show.
- All school assemblies included guests like Brazilian musicians, Grooversity, and authors Jessie Sima and Rajani LaRocca.
- Our 5th graders visited **Merrowvista** for an overnight camping trip, and our 6th graders enjoyed Thompson Island.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT

- We implemented grade-level and school-wide data meetings for each grade level. This process helped us identify our instructional strengths and to make instructional changes to support students' growth.
- Staff refined our **flex block practices** to ensure that students who needed more support could receive it without missing core instruction.

Christy Nealon
PRINCIPAL

Matt McDowell
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

McCarthy-Towne Core Values

- Community
- Risk taking
- Collaboration
- Persistence
- Flexibility
- Trust

- We hired a new literacy coach, Anne Joyce, who supported our staff in shifting their literacy practices from a workshop model to including more structured literacy instruction.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICES

- Our **Culturally Responsive Teacher Leaders** (Heather Matthews, Tippett, Ashley Lawlor, and Emma Twitchell) worked with SEED Leader (Kestrel Scherr) to provide professional learning on identity, names, and dependent/independent learners for our entire staff.
- Our DEI subcommittee began work on a guidance document to support PTSO planning committees.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

- Our entire staff participated in **Lesley Institute for Trauma Sensitivity**.
- Our Instructional Support team worked with **Jessica Minihan** to refine practices to support students with behavior.

ART INTEGRATION

- Students continued to learn about themselves as learners through the art integration process.
- We held an art show where students shared a piece from their art integration practice and one from the visual arts studio.



Merriam

Experiential, hands-on project-based learning provides opportunities for students to develop skills, self-confidence, a sense of responsibility, and enthusiasm for learning. Merriam emphasizes community building, supported by activities like our weekly All School Meetings. Special activities with our multi-age “family groups” include Community Day and two Theme Days. Students stay with the same family groups throughout their time at Merriam, gradually assuming leadership roles as they progress through the grades.

Highlights of the year included:

- This year’s theme for Merriam was our core values of **Risk-Taking, Persistence in one’s own Learning, and Respect**. Students were reminded of these core values on a daily basis and participated in activities centered around these values during Community and Theme Days. Next year, we look forward to celebrating Merriam’s 30th Year Anniversary!
- We continued our monthly STEAM challenges coordinated by our STEAM and Digital Literacy Coaches. This past winter, we had a parade where students created puppets, floats, and “balloons” in recognition of the various parades that different cultures have as celebrations.



Bryant Amitrano
INTERIM PRINCIPAL

Lynne Newman
INTERIM ASSISTANT
PRINCIPAL

Merriam Core Values

- Risk taking
- Persistence in Learning
- Respect



- As part of the District Initiative for MTSS, all grade levels implemented daily **flex blocks** where students could receive tiered intervention in math and literacy.
- During **Literacy Week**, high school students read books to students in various languages, and we had authors visit every classroom! We added a new element to our “**Tournament of Books**” where students provided and read acknowledgements for the books that did not move forward in the tournament to highlight the wonderful aspects of each piece of literature.
- Merriam 2nd graders worked in our **STEAM lab** to develop rescue efforts for injured animals as part of their Habitats project.
- As part of Merriam’s new PTO bylaws, the **school and parent organization** worked collaboratively to **provide all of the educators in the building with \$205 gift cards to Silver Unicorn Bookstore** in order to purchase culturally responsive literature to add to their classroom libraries.



At RJ Grey, we continue to find ways to make sure our students are connected to their school and are supported by trusted adults. This year, each of our **825 students** was assigned to an **Advisory group of 8-12 students**, led by a licensed staff member. These groups met two to three times per week in an informal setting with two goals: Create relationships between staff and students, and have fun! The program was successful in its first year! We used these groups to have several important conversations to support the ongoing work of our school. By the time our students completed our student survey in June, **83% of students reported they had a trusted adult who they could go to if necessary**. Our ongoing work is to make sure all of our students have adults they can trust at school and at home.

Our fall musical, ***Oliver, Jr.*** was a hit with audiences. A scene showcase later in the spring was equally awesome and highlighted the work of our creative actors, singers, and dancers! The number of students participating in band, chorus, and orchestra continues to

grow, showcased during several concerts this year. Our athletic program drew huge numbers of participants. Students competed against area middle schools in Cross Country, Soccer, Field Hockey, Basketball, Cheer, Baseball, Softball, Volleyball, and Track. Our student council continued its work in supporting RJ Grey and our greater community with a **Coat Drive**. They were joined by other student groups who collected food, clothing, gifts, and other items for those in need.

Our staff worked hard this year in many areas, including Advisory implementation. We worked with the Lesley Institute for **Trauma Sensitivity (LIFTS)** over six hours of professional learning to understand how a student's previous experiences with trauma may impact their ability to learn. More than 20 staff members also took the graduate courses associated with this work. Separately, a cohort of our staff engaged in a year-long book study of the text, ***Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* by Zaretta Hammond**. The ongoing learning of our staff is what makes us able to meet the needs of our diverse student body.



James Marcotte
PRINCIPAL

Elizabeth Broadwater
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Jun Wei Zhang
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Kelly Doherty
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

At RJ Grey Junior High School, our vision is to create a community of thinkers, learners, and responsible citizens.



ACTION-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL High School

Joanie Dean

PRINCIPAL

Beth Baker

ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL

Maurin O'Grady

ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL

Maurin O'Grady

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Michael Csorba

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Christopher Ocampo

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

During the 2022-2023 school year, everyone was excited to return to fully in-person events and activities. There was enthusiastic student participation and leadership at many traditional and new events. There were also large, energetic crowds at performances, club activities, and athletic contests.

Additionally, the high school embarked on a new advisory structure that had the goal of increasing connections between students and students and staff. **Advisories consisted of 10-12 students** from all four grade levels with students staying in their advisories for all four years of high school.

We also began making structural and pedagogical plans for increasing access to advanced level courses and providing more diverse learning experiences. Specifically, department leaders, teacher leaders, and teachers examined and then **proposed changes to our course leveling structure**. We also worked to incorporate culturally responsive practices into our instruction.

Here are some additional highlights from the year:

- Our nearly **100 Student Ambassadors** welcomed the Class of 2026 by providing tours and peer support before school started.
- We had approximately **80 clubs at ABRHS this year** in which many students participated. Students took part in local and national field trips and competitions including Speech and Debate, Science Team, Math Team, Academic Decathlon, Quiz Bowl, Invest in Girls, and Ocean Bowl to name a few. We are proud of our many students who earned distinctions and awards.
- Our **Student Council (StuCo)** worked to advocate and support students throughout the year. They increased communication and collaboration between students and administration and ran many successful events. Over **500 students attended their Homecoming Dance** in December! Other fun events included Power Bowl Football, Senior Dress Up Day, and the Student/Staff Basketball Game. StuCo donated \$1780 in mini-grants to clubs through the StuCo Activities Fund.
- Our student affinity groups and social justice groups were very active and helped pave the way for an inclusive school community for all. Among many other events, student groups led celebrations of Hanukkah,



Lunar New Year, Holi, Purim, and National Hijab Day. Our Student Prison Activism Club joined Tufts University to host several formerly incarcerated individuals who spoke to students about their experiences.

- **A-B Athletics had 63 teams** this year with a total of 1,548 participating students. We won six DCL titles, and it was our 14th consecutive year of winning a state championship. Congratulations to our **Girls Swim and Dive Team for winning the State Championship this past fall!** In June, we named our pool the Jeff Johnson Pool in honor of **Jeff Johnson**, our well-respected swimming coach from 1977 to 2017.
- This year, we are thrilled to start **Unified Sports** teams in both basketball and track and field! We had over 30 students participate in fun, exciting Unified games and competitions.
- This year, the high school was proud to offer the following courses for the first time (or the first time since the pandemic): *Understanding Race, Psychology and the Good Life, Science Research for Publication, Senior English with Project, Academic Writing for Former English Learners.*
- The ABRHS Marching Band, Band, Jazz Band, Orchestra, Orquesta de la Revolucion and Chorus performed throughout the year. A highlight of the year was our sold out **Serenade to Spring Concert** in May at the brand new Groton Hill Music Center. Over 250 students participated in this spectacular event.
- Our **Proscenium Circus** continued to wow audiences with productions of Broadway's satirical comedy **Urinetown the Musical**, METG (Massachusetts Educational Theater Guild) State semi-finalist Lost Girl, and a Spring Festival of Short Plays directed by members of the class of 2023.
- In January, we held our **23rd annual Community Service Awards Night**. This was our first in-person event in three years, and we are very proud of our

602 students who each volunteered over 20 hours last year. ABRHS students volunteered in total over 63,000 hours in 2022! Lindsey Rosenman, ABRHS Counselor, was awarded the Staff Community Service Award for her work at A-B and in the Acton and Boxborough communities.

- On April 12, we inducted **103 new members into the ABRHS National Honor Society (NHS)** at our annual NHS Induction Ceremony. The National Honor Society recognizes and promotes scholarship, leadership, service, and character.
- In May, we had our 31st annual Scholarship Night in person. Through the support and generosity of the Acton and Boxborough communities, we **awarded over 170 local scholarships that totaled about \$168,000.**
- We began **Early College partnerships** with colleges and universities. We had over five students participate in Economics, our first concurrent enrollment course with Middlesex Community College. We also partnered with several institutions to offer Pre-Calculus summer options as well. We are looking forward to our Early College partnerships and the expanding opportunities for our students in the coming years.
- On April 28, **over 400 12th grade volunteers participated in 47 service projects** throughout Acton and Boxborough for our annual Community Service Day. Seniors enjoyed Prom at the Waltham Westin on May 19 and their outing to Kimball Farm on May 30. The Class of 2023 may be the only ABRHS graduating class ever to graduate on both Leary Field and in the Regan Gym, due to weather. As has been typical of this class of students, they made the best of this unique graduation ceremony and enthusiastically cheered each other on throughout the event. Congratulations to our Class of 2023.

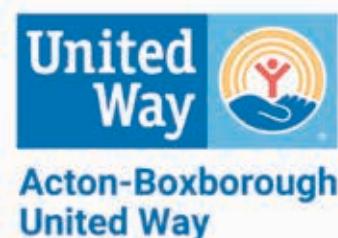


Photo courtesy of Pamela Fleming Photography



Introducing the A-B Resource Center

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE AB UNITED WAY



Recognizing the increasingly complex needs of families, a key priority for Acton-Boxborough Regional School District (ABRSD) leadership has been to create a central physical location where Acton and Boxborough residents can access school registration services (including language screening), alongside information about local community resources. Given the continuing demographic shifts of our two towns, special emphasis has been placed

on assisting families with language barriers and those joining the community from abroad. With this vision in mind, the Acton-Boxborough United Way (ABUW) was eager to support this project as it closely aligns with ABUW's mission and a partnership was struck between the two organizations. Beginning in July 2023, the ABUW staff will coordinate the services that are offered through the Resource Center. These include, but are not limited to the following.

CONCIERGE/HOST SERVICES

Providing a warm welcome to the community

Recruiting, training, scheduling, and overseeing volunteers to staff the "Welcome Desk" consistent hours each week, prioritizing multilingual capability

"KIOSK" OPERATION

Helping residents find the resources when they need them

Curating and maintaining a library of community information, including creation and translation of several overview handouts summarizing essential resources (food security, transportation, libraries/parks).

RESOURCE WEBSITE

Making community resources accessible in a digital and online format so families can continue to engage with the services that are helpful to them.

UNMET NEEDS

Supporting principals and counselors in providing non-school related help to families in need

Maintaining a Resource Room (clothes, backpacks, hygiene products) that can be made available to families. Serving as a central location for Unmet Needs referrals from principals/counselors, coordinate fulfillment with community partners (holiday gift, bikes, baby supplies, furniture, sports equipment.)



COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Leveraging ABUW's relationships with community partners to bring services to families

Coordinating with community partners to be available for specific dates/times in the Community Resource Center. Programs and services could include, but not be limited to, coordinating with partners to host English Language conversation groups at Center.

HEALTHY FAMILIES

Coordinate with local Board of Health and/or local pharmacies to host clinics, fairs, and functions that support community health education and access. Examples include, but not limited to, flu/covid booster clinic at Center, host mobile Blood Drive (Dana Farber) outside Center to generate awareness.

In the Spring of 2023, state Senator Jamie Eldridge offered his support for this initiative by [including an earmark as part of the state's FY24 budget](#) that is providing the Resource Center with an initial investment of \$100,000. This funding allows the District to complete important renovations of the physical space, and funding for other start-up related costs. We look forward to hosting the community for an Open House in October.

Staff Update

We thank our retiring staff for their many years of dedication to the district:

Marie Altieri	Deputy Superintendent	District
Melissa Andrew	Assistant Treasurer	District
Martha Bethel	4th Grade Teacher	Douglas
Maura Cedrone	Custodian	Conant
Brian Crossman	Minuteman Tech. Teacher	RJ Grey
Susan Dempsey	Asst. Transportation Manager	District
Margaret Dennehy	Treasurer	District
Michael Fortin	Custodian	McT
Linda Koch	Payroll Clerk	District
Paul McCarthy	Bus Driver	District
David McClung	Physics Teacher	ABRHS
Cynthia Mitton	Special Education Asst.	Merriam
Stanley Nelson	Custodian Head	ABRHS
Maria Nitzke	Special Education Asst.	Merriam
Patricia Peters	Special Education Asst.	Blanchard
Jeanne Potter	Office Support	ABRHS
Deborah Rimpas	Health Teacher	RJ Grey
Sharon Ryan	Elementary Curriculum Coord.	District
Mae Shoemaker	General Science Teacher	RJ Grey
David Verdolino	Dir. of Finance and Transportation	District



Congratulations to our staff who have achieved 20 years of service to the district:

Carmen Dajer	Special Education	Merriam
Debra Dawson	Guidance Counselor	Conant
Hye Kyung Dragone	Spanish Teacher	ABRHS
Elizabeth Fitzpatrick	Kindergarten Teacher	Douglas
Lisa Gurrie	Math Teacher	ABRHS
Vanessa Mann	Elementary Teacher	Merriam
Linda McCafferty	Bus Driver	District
Michelle McKelvie	Special Ed. Asst.	Gates
Carol Moser-Wight	MAP Coordinator	ABRHS
Sheila Owen	Elementary Teacher	Blanchard
Nancy Perry	Special Education	RJ Grey
Jodi Phelan	HR Project Manager	District
Kimberly Ryan	Biology Teacher	ABRHS
Philip Stameris	Math Teacher	RJ Grey

2023-2024 New Professional Staff, as of August 1, 2023

Tricia O'Reilly	Elementary Principal	Conant
Christina Gavin	Elementary Principal	Merriam
Lawrence Wolpe	Elementary Principal	Douglas
Sheri Matthews	Dir. of Finance and Operations	District
Kaitlyn Angulo	Assistant Principal	Merriam
Marc Hamel	Facilities Coordinator	District
Daniel Mazur	Asst. Director of Special Ed.	District

Teachers/Certified Staff

Mansi Gujar	English Language Education	District-Elem.
Amie Saulnier	English Language Education	District-Elem.
Leanne Berggrun	6th Grade Teacher	Blanchard
Anna Christiansen	Special Educator/Pathways	Blanchard
Audrey Donlon	3rd Grade Teacher	Blanchard
Kathleen Dunn	English Language Education	Blanchard
Laurie Furtado	Special Ed./Learning Center	Blanchard
Gretchen Webster	English Language Education	Blanchard
Kaitlin Brophy	Special Educator/Connections	Conant
Valerie Farley	5th Grade Teacher	Conant
Katie Antalek	Special Educator/Lab Program	Douglas
Katie Kennedy	2nd Grade Teacher	Douglas
Mary Mathany	4th Grade Teacher	Douglas
Megan Reid	2nd Grade Teacher	Douglas
Robin Springer	1st Grade Teacher	Douglas
Elizabeth Sullivan	Special Education Teacher	Douglas
Stephanie Tajima	4th Grade Teacher	Douglas
Emily Teager	School Psychologist	Douglas
Meredith Saven	1st Grade Teacher	Gates
Nisaka Bauman	6th Grade Teacher	McT
Gabrielle Lyons	School Adjustment Counselor	McT
Sara Schwalbert	Special Ed./Compass Program	McT
Adrienne Abramowitz	5th Grade Teacher	Merriam
Amanda Johnson	School Counselor	Merriam
Alyson Humpheys	Health Teacher	RJ Grey
Aimee Kellstrand	8th Grade Science	RJ Grey
William Kubik	School Adjustment Counselor	RJ Grey
Allison McKenna	8th Grade Science	RJ Grey
Ryan Morey	8th Grade English Teacher	RJ Grey
Timothy Ryan	7th Grade Math Teacher	RJ Grey
Allison Thomas	8th Grade Science	RJ Grey
Michael Oksanish	Physical Education Teacher	ABRHS



New School Committee Members



TORI CAMPBELL

Tori and her husband moved to Acton in 2018 after 20 years of Army service. Their kids attended McT, RJ Grey and A-B. Tori studied at West Point and Harvard, deployed to Bosnia and Iraq, commanded a company, taught at West Point and developed policy and resourced a \$400M, 1,000-person portfolio at the Pentagon. She has M.Eds in learning and education policy from Harvard. Tori teaches at a small school in Concord and has parent and teacher experience supporting kids with IEPs. She serves as Orienteering USA's Vice President for Youth Initiatives and a BSA girls' troop Scoutmaster.



LAKSHMI KAJA

Lakshmi has resided in Boxborough since 1996. She has been involved in the school system as a volunteer while raising her two children, who have since graduated from A-B. She is a practicing engineer and has been a team manager and district coordinator for nearly two decades in Destination Imagination. Lakshmi has always believed in a holistic educational system that integrates academic, adaptive, and social-emotional learning. Because her children of a wonderful environment promoting many of these values from the Acton-Boxborough school system several years ago, she would like to ensure that future generations of students have the same benefits.



VIKRAM PARIKH

Vikram and his wife moved to Boxborough in 2013 for the school district. Their son will begin his third year at Gates, and their daughter will begin at Gates in 2024. He is the Senior Network and Systems Administrator for the global nonprofit Oxfam America. Vikram has worked in IT for over 25 years. He obtained his B.A. from Hunter College and his M.S. from Baruch's Zicklin School of Business. Coming from a long line of educators, Vikram is a musician, studies Kung Fu, and has a passion for travel and adventure. He has lived in India, Hungary, Colombia, Switzerland, NYC and California.



LEELA RAMACHANDRAN

Leela grew up in Acton, attending A-B schools K-12. She went on to receive a B.S. in Public Health Sciences from UMass Amherst. While in school, she worked with youth as a tutor and a mentor. Leela's professional work is equity-driven public health research and evaluation, and she also consults to support organizations to improve their inclusionary policies and practices. Outside of work, she is politically involved and always looking for avenues to support positive change. She was elected to the School Committee in 2023 and is always looking to hear from community members. Please reach out!



YANXIN SCHMIDT

Yanxin Schmidt has been serving our community since moving to Acton with her husband and two sons in 2018. Prior to being elected to the school committee in May 2023, Yanxin volunteered for Meals on Wheels and served on A-B's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Family Advisory Group, which she co-chaired from 2020 to 2022. Currently, Yanxin, who holds a U.S. Soccer D Coaching License, serves as a Vice President for Boston Area Youth Soccer (BAYS). Yanxin holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Clinical Laboratory Science/ Medical Technology. She is fluent in both English and Mandarin Chinese.

Welcome Our New Administrators



CHRISTINA GAVIN

Principal, Merriam Elementary

Christina previously served as the Assistant Principal of Estabrook School in Lexington, MA. She has also held prior roles as an Inclusion Specialist, Special Educator and Elementary Classroom Teacher.



SHERI MATTHEWS

Director of Finance and Operations

Sheri previously served as the Asst. Supt. for Finance and Operations for the Weston Public Schools. Prior to Weston, she served as the Director of Business Services for the Tewksbury Public Schools. Sheri received both her B.S. in Business Management and her Masters of Science in Leadership, from Northeastern University.



DANIEL MAZUR

Assistant Director of Special Education

Daniel served as the middle school special education team chair and extended school year coordinator in Hopkinton. Prior to these roles, he was a teacher of students with severe special needs for 17 years. He received his M.S. in Ed. through Simmons College, a certification in applied behavior analysis (BCBA) via Northeastern University, and a license as a special education administrator at Boston University.



DR. TRICIA O'REILLY

Principal, Conant Elementary

Tricia previously served as the Principal of Happy Hollow Elementary School in Wayland, MA. Dr. O'Reilly has also held prior roles as the Director of Elementary Math and Science Curriculum and Grade 5 Classroom Teacher in the Wayland Public Schools.

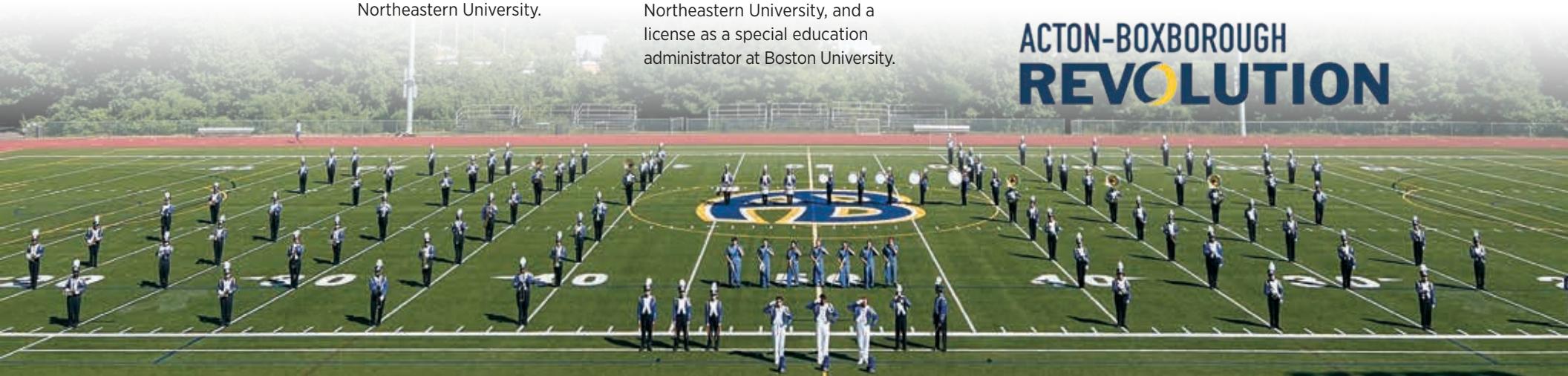


LARRY WOLPE

Principal, Douglas Elementary

Larry previously served in Framingham Public Schools, most recently as Principal of Potter Road Elementary School. He held prior roles as Assistant Principal of Potter Road and was a Fourth Grade Teacher at Stapleton School in Framingham.

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH
REVOLUTION





Acton-Boxborough Regional School District **2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT**



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