

REPORT OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

To the Citizens of the Town of Abington:

It is my privilege, on behalf of my fellow board members, to present to the citizens of Abington for their consideration our annual report. The current makeup of the Abington School Committee includes: Brenda L. Pignone, Chairperson; Wayne K. Rogiers, Vice Chairperson; Russell W. FitzGerald, Secretary; Patricia Vantine and James West, Members. Elizabeth Keohane serves as the student representative to the Abington School Committee.

As in the past, it has been a busy year for the Abington School Committee. In addition to regularly scheduled monthly meetings, there were several special hearings/forums conducted which addressed budget, school choice, test results from the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAS) and issues related to our Long Range Master Plan for Abington School Facilities.

At last April's Abington Annual Town Meeting, an FY-2008 budget of \$18,096,995.00 was approved for the Abington Public Schools. The increase of \$1,302,995.00 in the school department's FY-2008 operating budget represented approximately a 7.8% increase over FY-2007 levels of funding. The FY08 budget was truly a "Level Service" budget. Given the large increases in mandated costs in Special Education and contractual obligations, the budget did not support adding staff for new programs or services. However, compared to the plight of other school districts where staff, programs and services are being reduced, Abington was fortunate. Members of the Abington School Committee played a key role in convincing the Abington Finance Committee, Abington Board of Selectmen and citizens at the Annual Town Meeting to support an increase in school funding.

I am happy to report that some progress was made during FY-2008 to address facility projects highlighted in our district's Long-Range Master Plan for School Facilities (2004). The school department is grateful that the following steps were taken to address facility needs:

- the appropriation of \$1,191,000.00 to replacement of the Early Childhood Center's 45 year old windows;
- the support given by the townspeople at the November Special Town Meeting and subsequent town election for the passage of a \$2,053,000.00 Proposition 2 ½ debt exclusion for the replacement of the windows at Abington High School;
- the appropriation of \$54,500.00 at the November Special Town Meeting to purchase computers, related equipment and software as proposed in the school department's Technology Plan.

As 2007 came to a close, the school administration was busy finalizing the school department's FY-2009 Preliminary Budget Proposal for presentation to the Abington School Committee in early January 2008. As in the previous year escalating increases for mandated special education services and out-of-district placements and fixed employee costs will present special challenges to the Committee as FY-2009 budget deliberations move forward.

Annually, the Abington School Committee reviews, updates and approves detailed action plans to support our district's Vision 2008 Strategic Plan. The six (6) action plans establish priorities for our school improvement efforts in each of our goal areas on student achievement, facilities, finance, technology, community partnerships and citizenship. Copies of the Vision 2008 Strategic Plan are available to the public in all school offices.

During 2007, the Abington Public Schools continued to implement the many provisions of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 and No Child Left Behind, the 2002 landmark federal education law. Curriculum development activities and the professional development of our staff remained top priorities. With a focus on our third and recently revised Five-Year Curriculum Review and Update Plan and the tenth administration of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment Tests (MCAS); faculty, staff and administration continue to revise curriculum, instructional strategies and assessment practices.

The Committee also accepted with regret the retirement notices of the following faculty and staff:

- John J. Aherne – Superintendent of Schools
- Kathleen K. Dowling – Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services
- Sherrie Fay – Kindergarten Teacher
- Mabel Ford – Kindergarten Teacher
- Nancy Mace – Paraprofessional
- Karen McDonald – Physical Education Teacher

These individuals have served the Town of Abington well, and we wish them the best in their retirement years.

In closing, I would like to thank the entire school department staff, townspeople, clubs, organizations and volunteers for their cooperation and continued support of the children of Abington during these difficult financial times. I especially would like to express my gratitude to all members of the School Committee and the administrative staff for their continued assistance.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda L. Pignone, *Chairperson*
Abington School Committee