

Report of the School Committee

To the Citizens of the Town of Abington:

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

It has been an especially busy year for the Abington School Committee. In addition to regularly scheduled monthly meetings, there were several special hearings/forums conducted which addressed a difficult budget year, school choice and test results from the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAS).

At last April's Abington Annual Town Meeting, an FY-2009 budget of \$19,121,719.⁰⁰ was approved for the Abington Public Schools. The increase of \$1,024,724.⁰⁰ in the school department's FY-2009 operating budget represented approximately a 5.7% increase over FY-2008 levels of funding. The FY09 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 difficulties 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 significant 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 completion of a \$1,191,000.⁰⁰ window replacement project at the Early Childhood Center;
- the completion of a \$2,053,000.⁰⁰ window replacement project at Abington High School;

These projects not only provide for weather tight and more energy efficient buildings, they have substantially improved the esthetics of the two buildings. The improvements have been so dramatic that a group of high school students were compelled to write thank you letters to the School Committee.

As 2008 came to a close, the school administration was busy finalizing the school department's FY-2010 Preliminary Budget Proposal for presentation to the Abington School Committee in early January 2009. 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. These fixed increases come at a time when our nation, state and town are facing an ever worsening financial crisis. It is with both great hope and concern that the Committee will move forward with the FY-2010 budget deliberations.

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 2008, 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 eleventh 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:

Stephen Blomberg – Special Education Teacher
Carol Brigham – Elementary Teacher
Stephen Kingman – Special Education Teacher
Paul J. Lombardi – Head Custodian
Anne Manna – Elementary Teacher
James McGrath – Director of Guidance
Alberta Morley - Paraprofessional
Robert Murphy – Assistant Principal at the Frolio Middle School
Susan Smith – Elementary 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, Superintendent of Schools, Peter Schafer, and all members of the administrative staff for their continued assistance.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda L. Pignone, Chairperson
Abington School Committee