



ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

15 Charter Road, Acton, MA 01720
978-264-4700 | www.abschools.org

DEVELOPING ENGAGED, WELL-BALANCED LEARNERS THROUGH COLLABORATIVE, CARING RELATIONSHIPS

Elementary Family Handbook: 2026-27 School Year

Including School Policies and Procedures

Blanchard Memorial School

Boardwalk Lower School

Boardwalk Upper School

Parker Damon Lower School

Parker Damon Upper School

www.abschools.org

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Acton-Boxborough Regional School District Vision, Values and Mission

Vision: *To provide high-quality educational opportunities that inspire a community of learners*

Values:

- **Wellness** - We partner with families to prioritize social emotional wellness, which is necessary for learning and developing resilience
- **Equity** - We ensure all students have equitable access to programs and curricula to reach their potential
- **Engagement** - We provide engaging educational opportunities where students develop passion and joy for learning

Mission: *To develop engaged, well-balanced learners through collaborative, caring relationships*

Elementary School Phone Numbers

School	Principal	Safe Arrival Line	Main Office Line
Blanchard	Michael Votto	978-264-4293	978-263-4569
Boardwalk Upper	Larry Wolpe	978-266-2566	978-266- 2560
Boardwalk Lower	Allison Warren	978-263-7425	978-266-2570
Parker Damon Upper	Christy Nealon	978-264-4098	978-264-3377
Parker Damon Lower	Christina Gavin	978-264-3373	978-264-3371

Elementary School Hours of Operation

<i>Elementary Hours</i>	8:50 - 3:20
<i>AM Kindergarten Hours</i>	8:50 - 11:50
<i>Wednesdays (Early Release)</i>	8:50 - 12:50

General Information

The Main Office serves as the center for a wide range of important activities and is the communication link between home and school. If you need to leave a message for a member of the staff, we will connect you to their voicemail.

Emergency Information

Parent/guardian are required to complete online emergency information for every student in PowerSchool. Up-to-date information allows the office to contact parent/guardian in case of an emergency, a sick child, or a bus dismissal question. It is **extremely important** to update your emergency information immediately if there is a change in address or telephone number(s) at home and/or at work, as well as your cell phone number. For similar reasons, we also need current addresses and home numbers of childcare providers and at least one person to contact in case of an emergency.

Telephone Use

Students are allowed to use school phones for school-related business only. In order to promote growing independence and appropriate sense of responsibility, students are discouraged from calling home for forgotten homework, band instruments, sneakers, etc...

Student Directory

Each of our elementary schools generally discloses directory information with parental consent. Such information includes each student's name, address, telephone number, and homeroom/class list. In the event families do not want the school to release such directory information, they should indicate this in the PowerSchool Parent Portal. This is located in the School/Parent Group Permissions in the parent portal.

School Visitors

All doors are locked at the beginning of the school day. For the safety of all children, no parent/adult is permitted to go to a classroom without first obtaining permission from the office. All visitors must buzz in and register at the office. Visitors should sign in the Visitor's Log and wear a Visitor badge while in the building. Visitors not wearing badges will be directed to check in at the school office. Do not park in the emergency vehicle lane at the school entrance. Before leaving, visitors should turn in their pass and sign out.

Security Camera Notification

The Acton Boxborough Regional School District uses video cameras throughout the District for the purpose of enhancing school safety and security. The objective is to promote and foster a safe and secure teaching and learning environment for students and staff, to improve public safety for community members who visit or use our school property, and diminish the potential for personal and district loss or destruction of property. Security camera recordings will be viewable in each building by authorized designees only.

Lost and Found

Lost and found items are placed in a specially designated area. Children are encouraged to label clothing and personal property with their names written in a clear and visible manner. Periodically, all items in the lost and found that are unclaimed are donated to a local charity. The PTO/PTF attempts to notify parent/guardian prior to such a donation.

Lunch and Recess

Hot lunches and other entrees are served every full day of school. Students who choose to bring their own lunches may purchase milk as an a-la-cart item. Monthly, schools will send lunch menus home with students, and they are also published on school and District websites. Free breakfast and lunch are available to all. Parent/guardian can manage their child's cafeteria account online through School Café, which can be accessed from the District homepage (www.abschools.org) or <https://www.schoolcafe.com>.

With few exceptions (rain, wind chill of less than 20°F, etc.), students should expect to go outdoors for recess.

Student Arrival and Dismissal

Safe Arrival Line

If a student will be absent or tardy, a parent/guardian **must** report the absence or tardy through the safe arrival system. If a student is marked absent and Safe Arrival was not notified, a staff member will call a parent/guardian at home or at work to verify that the child is safe. If a parent/guardian cannot be reached and there is a concern about the safety of that child, the Police Department will be called for a wellness check. You may report your child's absence or tardiness by calling the Safe Arrival Phone Number (listed on page 2 of this handbook) or school's procedure that has been communicated to families.

Early Student Arrivals

Students may not arrive at school any more than 15 minutes before the official beginning of the school day, as we do not allow unsupervised children in the building. There is no supervision provided for a child prior to this time unless parent/guardian have previously arranged for their child to attend after-school or extended day programs.

Parent/Guardian Drop Off and Pick-Up Procedures

If you drive your child to school, please follow the individual school procedures. A parent/guardian may not enter the bus loading/unloading zone during arrival or dismissal times. Under no circumstance may a parent/guardian pass a school bus with its stop sign displayed out on the side.

Dismissal

For the safety of each child, the school must be aware of the dismissal plans for all students. Students are expected to go home on the bus after school. Classroom teachers will dismiss walkers, bicyclists, and students to be picked up by parent/guardian. Students being picked up should meet their parent/guardian in the school's designated drop off/pick-up area. It is important to note that there is no after school supervision, and students must leave the building or attend extended day. Please follow your school's dismissal plan and expectations.

Bus Passes and Walkers

Parent/Guardian are able to submit permanent bus passes (to go to a licensed day care) and if approved they are notified. Parent/Guardian are responsible for making sure to inform the school of dismissal plans.

Students Leaving School Early

Please follow school procedure for leaving school early. Early dismissal is discouraged, as important learning takes place throughout each day. Medical appointments should occur outside of school hours whenever possible.

A sick or injured student will be dismissed from school through the health office. In any serious emergency, every attempt will be made to contact the parent/guardian or their designee. In cases where parent/guardian or their designees cannot be contacted, the school's administrator and/or nurse will take whatever emergency action is deemed necessary. A parent/guardian must be able to pick up a child within 60 minutes of receiving a call from the school. If parent/guardian are unable to arrive within that time frame, they must ensure that they have designated a trusted adult to pick up their student.

For purposes of safety, a child will be released only to their parent/guardian/guardians unless the school has been notified in writing by the parent/guardian that they have granted permission for someone else to pick up their child. The parent, or authorized person, **MUST** come to the office to sign out the child. Students will be called from their classroom after they have been signed out in the office. We may ask to see a form of identification of the non-custodial adult who is picking up your child. Please communicate with them so that they bring identification.

Parent/guardian must notify the school office before any student is removed from the school at any time. *It is the family's responsibility to notify any daycare providers of a student absence.*

Extended Day Program

Our Extended Day program, available to families for a fee, provides supervised exercise, play and study before and after school for Grades K-6. Extended Day staff provide a safe, creative and supportive environment. Extended Day is in session in accordance with the school calendar, and there are also programs offered during the District's April, February, and summer vacations.

Students Remaining After School

No student is to remain after school without the consent of their parent or guardian. Parent/guardian must arrange for transportation if they have agreed to have their child stay after school. Teachers will contact parent/guardian if there is a need for children to remain at school after the normal school hours.

Bicycles

All bicycles should be locked when placed in the racks (where provided). Any damage to bicycles should be reported to the office. Students should put their bikes in the rack that is closest to their arrival point to avoid riding across the pick-up/drop off or bus lines.

School Cancellation

It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to monitor school cancellations, closings, and delayed openings. In cases of cancellations, closings, or delayed openings due to inclement weather or other emergencies, the District will notify using the local radio, television stations, email, phone, and text communication. Parent/guardian are advised to listen carefully to radio/TV announcements to determine whether school will be canceled for the day. The District will also notify families by email and phone and post it on the District website (www.abschools.org).

Delayed Opening

In the case of a delayed opening, students attending half-day preschool and half-day kindergarten will not be expected to attend school. Students attending the full day preschool and kindergarten classes will follow the same schedule as the upper grades, depending on the number of hours of the delay. In the event of a delayed opening, ALL before-school activities are canceled.

Emergency Closing/Dismissal

If the weather is threatening and parent/guardian will not be home that day, they should make arrangements for their child(ren) in the event that school is dismissed early. In the event that school is dismissed prior to the regular dismissal time due to emergency conditions, we must know each student's destination without having to contact parent/guardian. Students will be dismissed to the location parent/guardian designated for emergencies. Families should review and discuss the planned emergency dismissal location with their child(ren), and should not count on being able to reach school by telephone in these instances, as the school lines are usually quite busy. In the event of an emergency school closing, ALL after-school activities are canceled.

Attendance

In order for children to have a successful learning experience and feel that they are integral members of the class, it is important that they be present when school is in session. Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 76l, Section 1 states a student's absences may "not exceed seven full-day sessions or fourteen half-day sessions in any period of six months." One of the keys to academic improvement is good attendance with consistent participation in school.

Parents/guardians, as well as students, have the responsibility to ensure that attendance at school is regular and timely. Schools are required by law to keep track of attendance and are also required by law to address any problems. This may be simply notifying parents/guardians through meetings and/or attendance letters and working together to improve the student's attendance. In extreme instances, it may require the assistance of the Department of Social Services.

Tardiness

Students are discouraged from coming in late to school, as work for the day begins as soon as buses unload. It is difficult for students who are tardy to get oriented and work through the expectations of the day.

Truancy

In order for children to have a successful learning experience and to feel included in all of the social and academic activities of the classroom, it is important that they be present when school is in session. Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 76, Section 1 states a student "may be excused up to seven day sessions or fourteen half day sessions in any period of six months." One key to student success is good attendance and consistent school participation.

Parents/Guardians have the responsibility to ensure regular student attendance. If student absences appear excessive, the principal will schedule a parent-teacher conference. Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10% or more of the school year for any reason, excused, unexcused, or suspensions. In a 180-day school year, that means a student is chronically absent if they miss 18 or more days. If absences continue, we may require the assistance of the school resource officer and/or the intervention of the Department of Children and Families.

Absences Due to Vacation During School Time

Absences for family trips and/or vacations are strongly discouraged and are considered unexcused. The District will not be responsible for curriculum or instruction missed during these unexcused absences. Educators are not obligated to provide assignments in advance for known absences unless otherwise agreed upon with the family, or as specified by a student's 504 Plan or Individualized Education Program (IEP). Students are responsible for making up any missed work within a reasonable period upon their return to school. Although missed assignments can be made up, it is not a substitute for the missed learning opportunities that occur in the classroom.

Religious Holidays

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee recognizes the diverse nature of our growing community. Our District has a diverse population of families whose heritage and culture vary greatly. ABRSD shares a commitment to respect individual religious beliefs.

Families are responsible for notifying educators regarding any religious holidays that will affect their child's regular school program. Students will not be expected to complete daily homework assigned the evening before or the day of the religious holiday. If a student is affected by a religious holiday that is not observed with a schoolwide closing, the student will be allowed to have additional, reasonable time to complete assignments and assessments that conflict with their holiday observance, even in the event that the student attends classes on that day. Typically, on the eve of significant religious holidays, educators will not give tests, homework, or introduce major new concepts and/or applications, nor will they plan field trips on the religious holiday itself. However, long-term assignments may still be due the day before or the day after the religious holiday.

Family Involvement

Parent-Teacher Conferences

We rely upon conferences between teachers, students, and parents/guardians to exchange information, share expectations and concerns, and engage in solving problems. Teachers schedule at least two conferences— one in the fall and one in the spring. Additionally, teachers, parents/guardians, and students may initiate other conferences as needed.

PowerSchool's Parent Portal

PowerSchool is our web-based student information system. This system's Parent Portal allows us to collect emergency contact information, school/PTO/PTF related permissions, and to notify parent/guardian of their child's classroom placement. Prior to the start of the school year, parent/guardian receive email notifications that include Parent Portal web access information, username, and family password to allow them to enter all necessary student information and complete other forms online. Once parents/guardian have completed all the necessary forms, they will gain access to their child's classroom placement and class lists.

Parent Square

Parent Square is a communication tool designed to streamline how families receive information from the schools and the district. All parents/guardians are expected to access Parent Square for school information and notifications. Log in at Parentsquare.com/signin or download the app. Register your ParentSquare account so you can:

- Customize email, text, and/or app notifications
- RSVP for classroom and school activities
- Securely receive important student documents
- Sign permission slips

Who to Contact with Concerns

The staff at each school is ready to address and help resolve all issues that arise in the school day. We believe that *concerns are best addressed with the individuals most directly connected* to the issue. Voicemail and email are the most direct and efficient means of contact. It is inevitable that some parent/guardian will encounter concerns, issues, or questions that need to be resolved.

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers are an integral part of our school community. At the beginning of the school year, please watch for volunteer forms sent home for families to indicate areas of interest. Some volunteering opportunities are recurring, while others involve a one-time effort.

Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) Check for Volunteers

According to state law, anyone who may have direct and unmonitored contact with children must have a CORI check done *prior to* volunteering in the school. All CORI information is confidential. CORI forms are available to parent/guardian through the school main office. Parent/guardian interested in volunteering must complete and return the form. Completing a CORI check also requires a picture identification, which must be provided in person to the office staff.

Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO/PTF)

All parent/guardian and teachers are encouraged to participate in the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) or parent/guardian, Teachers, Friends (PTF) at their school. The PTO/PTF offers each parent/guardian the opportunity to meet new people and work together to enrich educational experiences at the school. The general goals of the PTO/PTF are to provide:

- support to programs and teachers through fundraising and volunteer activities
- an opportunity for social interactions among the entire school community
- education-related information to the parent/guardian
- a forum for communication between parent/guardian and faculty

School Council

Each of our elementary schools has a school council. The school council is an advisory body that works together to provide ideas to help the principal. School council members assist by providing recommendations relevant to the educational needs of students, reviewing the budget with the principal, and participating actively in the identification of the annual school improvement planning process. For more information, visit the school's website.

Classroom Placement Process

The student placement procedure occurs in the spring. Our goal is to make the best possible placements for each of our students. We believe that the best way to do this is to create heterogeneous and balanced classes. Creating these groupings for each grade level is a complex process. Our professional staff members spend a great deal of time carefully weighing each student's academic, social, and emotional needs, as well as more individual issues such as those regarding particular peer relationships, neighborhood situations, or siblings' experiences.

The principal, sending and receiving teachers, and the other specialists meet as a team to create balanced class sections, after which a teacher is assigned to each of the sections by the principal. ***We absolutely do not accept or honor specific teacher requests.*** If parents/guardians have any relevant, compelling information that they feel is important to include in our placement procedure, please communicate that information in writing to the principal by April 15th.

Homework

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee has developed a district-wide homework policy that each of our elementary schools follows. This policy can be found on our website under School Committee Policy IKB. This policy supports balance for our students while still engaging them in deep learning experiences. The District recognizes the need for students and families to have playtime, downtime and family time (PDF) to promote wellness. Social-emotional wellness and balance in the lives of our students leads to better learning. Better balance also allows students to engage in activities of their choice, including independent reading. Assigned homework will fall within the following frequencies:

- **Grades K-2:** Students will have no homework except for an occasional activity that may include other people
- **Grades 3-4:** Students will occasionally have an assigned activity
- **Grades 5-6:** Students may expect homework more frequently, Monday through Thursday

Supports for Students

Counseling

The goal of the counseling department is to ensure a successful school experience for all students. Our counselors work closely with students, parent/guardian, teachers, administrators and specialists to help students develop a positive self-image, the skills to work collaboratively with others, and the ability to make friends. Parent/guardian are encouraged to utilize the counselor to discuss concerns. The counselor is familiar with therapists, providers, and other resources in the community that families can access outside the school setting. The Counselor is also the 504 Coordinator in the building and works with families to determine eligibility for 504 plans based on federal guidelines.

Literacy and Math Support Programs

The general education mathematics and reading programs at the elementary level are designed to meet the needs of all learners. Some children, however, benefit from additional small group instruction in or out of the classroom. The mathematics and reading support programs provide strategies to help these children become independent learners.

English Language Education (ELE) Program

The ELE program is an instructional program based on federal and state guidelines. By identifying students whose home language is a language other than or in addition to English, the ELE Program helps multilingual learners gain equal access to our educational programs, as mandated by federal and state laws.

Health and Nursing Services

There is a full time registered nurse at each elementary school. Our school nursing program mission is to promote the safety and wellness of students and staff during the school day in order to optimize learning. School nurses provide a variety of services including assessment, direct care, health care plan development, screening, and education.

Special Education Services

Our elementary schools offer a wide range of identification, educational, therapeutic and support services for students in Kindergarten through Grade 6. When students are referred for a special education evaluation, special education team members assess them to determine eligibility. This team collaborates with other school staff and parent/guardian to write Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students who qualify for special education services.

Programming for eligible students with disabilities may include a variety of services, such as specialized instruction in reading, math, social, and/or emotional areas, speech language pathology services, psychological services, or occupational or physical therapy. For more information on our special education services, please visit: [Special Education in AB](#) or contact the Special Education Office at 978-264-4700.

Curriculum

Consistent with Massachusetts regulations, 603 CMR 26.05(1), the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District, through its curricula and materials, encourages respect for the human and civil rights of all individuals, regardless of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin or sexual orientation. In accordance with district guidelines, families may

request information from the building principal on available accommodations related to curriculum content.

Student Records

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA") and the Massachusetts Student Records Regulations ("Massachusetts Regulations") together provide parents and eligible students (those who have reached the age of 14 or who have entered the ninth grade) certain rights with respect to the student's education records. A general overview of those rights is provided below.

These rights include:

1. The right to access the student's education records as soon as practicable and within ten days of the day the school receives a request for access. Parents/guardians or eligible students should submit to the school principal a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The school principal will make arrangements for access and notify the parent/guardian or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected. Massachusetts General Laws Ch. 71, Section 34H provides who does not have physical custody of a child. Information about these procedures can be obtained from the building principal or the Deputy Superintendent of Schools.
2. The right to request amendment of the student's education records. Parents/guardians or eligible students should direct their request to the principal, clearly identifying the part of the record they wish to have amended and why they believe it is inaccurate.
3. The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA and the Massachusetts Regulations authorize disclosure without consent.

Some of the Exceptions:

- One exception that permits disclosure without consent is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the school as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the SchoolBoard; a person or company with whom the school has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing their tasks. A school official as a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.
- ABRSD may disclose information to eligible receiving high schools for the purpose of transition from eighth to ninth grade.
- Upon request, ABRSD also discloses all student records (which include health records and special education records, if any) without parent/guardian/eligible student consent to officials of other schools in which the student seeks or intends to enroll.
- ABRSD may disclose, without written consent, designated "directory information," which is information generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. The primary purpose of directory information is to allow the district to include this type of information from your child's records in certain school publications. Information that a district designates as directory information may be disclosed to outside organizations (for example, yearbook publishers) without prior consent.

4. The right to file a complaint concerning alleged failures by the district to comply with the regulations and laws governing student records. Complaints may be filed with the Massachusetts Department of Education, 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148 and/or the Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202-5901.

Confidentiality of Student Records

No individual or organization other than the parent, guardian, eligible student, or school personnel working directly with the student is allowed access to a student's record without specific written consent of the parent or eligible student, except in limited instances as specified by the state and federal regulations governing student records.

As required by Massachusetts General Law Chapter 71, Section 34H, a parent who does not have physical custody of his/her child (non-custodial parent) must provide certain written information to the principal in order to access the student's record. A description of the information that the non-custodial parent must submit can be obtained from our school office.

Amendments/Deletions from Student Records

The parent, guardian, or eligible student has the right to add relevant comments, information, or other written material to the student record, to request that information contained in the record be amended or deleted, and to have a conference with the school principal for the purpose of objecting to information on the record. Within a week of such a conference, the principal must render a written decision on the objection. If the parent, guardian, or eligible student is not satisfied with the principal's decision, they may appeal such decision to the superintendent.

Transfer of Student Records

To transfer your child's records to another school, a signed *Student Release Record Form* (available in the school office) should be signed by a parent or guardian.

Destruction of Records

A student's temporary record shall be destroyed no later than 3 years after graduation. Students who withdraw, transfer, graduate, or otherwise leave the district will have access to their ABSchools Google account (including Gmail and Drive) until June 30th of the calendar year in which they leave the district, at which point accounts will be permanently deleted. Should the family/student want to maintain any items from the ABSchools account, it is their responsibility to export items contained in the account prior to the June 30th deletion date. A student permanent record, which consists of a high school transcript, may be destroyed no sooner than 60 years after the student leaves the school system.

Student Activities

Band, Strings, and Chorus

Students in the 4th-6th grades are provided with opportunities to learn to play instruments or to sing in the school choir. These groups perform several public concerts each year. You can access specific information from this [website](#) on the offerings, expectations, and schedule.

Birthday Celebrations

In accordance with the District Wellness Policy, food is not permitted to celebrate student birthdays.

Field Trips

Field trips are planned to reinforce various areas of study. They provide an experience not possible within the regular classroom, provide cultural enrichment, and take advantage of many excellent resources outside the classroom. In order to attend the field trip, and prior to any field trip, each student must bring in a permission slip signed by their parent or guardian.

Since field trips are part of our curriculum, each trip is considered to be the lesson plan for the day. All children are expected to participate. If parent/guardians choose not to have their child participate, they must realize that it is not possible for us to provide alternate plans for their child. If a child does not participate in the field trip and comes to school, they will be placed in another classroom, generally at another grade level since classes at each grade usually attend field trips together. The child will do the work assigned to students in that class.

Parent/guardian pay the cost of their children's transportation and any other costs, such as entrance fees and lunch. *No student will miss a field trip due to financial hardship.* For information on scholarships, please contact your child's classroom teacher or the main office. For reasons of safety or supervision concerns, teacher(s) or principal may cancel field trips. Fees will be refunded whenever possible.

Health and Safety

The ABRSD recognizes that education and health are closely linked. The school setting offers unique opportunities for children to learn healthy behaviors through education and to receive health services when needed. Parents/guardians are welcome and encouraged to communicate with the school nurse any time they have a question about a school-health related concern or need to communicate new health information. Input from students' parents/guardians is vital to maintaining an atmosphere that supports and promotes health so that students can make the most of their educational experience.

Life-Threatening Allergies

Parents/guardians must notify the school nurse at the start of each school year, or upon diagnosis, of any life-threatening allergies.

For any student prescribed epinephrine:

- An **unexpired auto-injector** must be provided to the health office no later than the first day of school.
- **Medical orders** signed by the prescribing medical provider and written parent/guardian consent to administer, must be submitted to the health office, no later than the first day of school each year.

Parents/guardians of students with allergic conditions requiring emergency medication are encouraged to ensure that their child is familiar with epinephrine auto injector use, the self-injection procedure, and emergency protocols.

On field trips, if a student cannot self-inject, it is strongly recommended that a parent/guardian accompany the student. Before the trip, parents/guardians should confirm that their child's non-expired epinephrine auto injector, in its original box with the prescription label, is available in the nurse's office.

Medication

Medication will be administered in accordance with the Acton-Boxborough Medication Administration Policy and Procedures.

Please note that every effort should be made to administer all medications, both prescription and over-the counter, at home. When a physician specifies that medication must be administered during the school day, the nurse should be contacted so that a plan can be developed for medication administration.

- All medications (prescription and over the counter) must be hand delivered to the school nurse by a parent or guardian for student safety. Medical orders for all medication (prescription and over the counter) as well as written parental consent are required for administration in the school setting.
- All prescription medication must be in the most recent pharmacy labeled container. The label must include the following information: child's full name, name of medication, prescription number, dosage, and time to be administered. The label must match the medical order. No more than a 30 day supply will be accepted by the

school nurse.

- Over the counter medications must be in the original packaging, with the directions for use clearly legible. No more than a 30 day supply will be accepted by the school nurse.

Emergency medications will be administered in accordance with applicable medical orders and district policy.

The Acton-Boxborough school physician has provided the school nurses standing orders for a limited number of over the counter medications, that are kept in the health office. Parents/guardians should respond in the designated area of their child's PowerSchool account if they wish to give consent for these medications to be administered if needed.

For students participating in school-sponsored activities outside of the regular school day (such as athletics, after-school programs, field trips, and extracurricular school events), parent/guardian are responsible for notifying the school nurse and the appropriate staff member (e.g., coach, advisor, or trip leader) if their child requires medication or has a health-related need during the activity. Upon notification, school staff will work with families to determine an appropriate plan to support the student's safe participation.

Student Illness

Since students spend much of the school day in close contact, illnesses can spread quickly. If you know or suspect that your child is ill, please keep them home if they have any of the following symptoms:

- A fever of 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit or more.
- Vomiting or diarrhea.
- Eye(s) that are red, itchy and/or are draining yellowish fluid.
- Cough that is frequent and disruptive to the child's learning.
- A medical provider suspects a communicable illness (strep throat, conjunctivitis or pink eye, covid, influenza or the flu, etc) and you are awaiting the test results
- New /undiagnosed rashes.

Students may return to school when:

- Fever has been within normal limits for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen (i.e Tylenol/Motrin/Advil).
- Vomiting and diarrhea has been resolved for 24 hours, the student feels better and has resumed a normal diet.
- Students prescribed antibiotics for a bacterial infection may return to school after taking their prescribed medication for at least 24 hours, have been fever free for 24 hours and feel well enough to be in school.
- Cough has improved and is tolerated by the student.

Mandated Health Screenings

The following state-mandated health screenings are conducted each year by the school nurses:

VISION: Grades PreK through 5

HEARING: Grades K through 3

POSTURAL (SCOLIOSIS): Grades 5 and 6

GROWTH (BMI): Grades 1 and 4

Head Lice

If head lice are found on a student, the school will dismiss the child for treatment. On return to school after being treated, the child must stop in for a re-check in the school health office. If live lice are found, students will be sent home for treatment again. More information can be found on the [Health and Nursing website](#).

Ticks

Being outdoors and active are key developmental needs for children, which is why they go outside daily for recess. Additionally, as part of our elementary science curriculum, they are also required to explore nature outdoors. During warmer weather and when children have been outdoors, parents/guardians should ensure that they are doing a “tick check” on younger students and teaching older students to check themselves. For more information, please contact the school nurse, your child’s physician, or the [CDC website](#).

Live Animals

No animals are to be on school grounds without prior consent from administration.

Emergency Procedures

The District has adopted an Emergency Response Plan to address a range of emergency situations. The plan is available in the school office for review.

Technology

Empowered Digital Use Student Contract

The ABRSD has an *Empowered Digital Use Student Contract* for computers and the Internet. In order to use any online resource safely and responsibly in a school setting, students must agree to follow the expectations outlined in the district contract. Students should be familiar with these guidelines to ensure their understanding of safe and appropriate uses of technology. Parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss the contents of this policy with their children. In addition, staff will review it with their students at the beginning of each school year to establish standards for use and reemphasize safety guidelines. Potential consequences may include, but are not limited to, written or verbal warnings, call home, an apology of action, loss of ABSchools access, and a meeting with school administration. Families may be subject to a surcharge of up to \$250 for damage, loss, or misuse of district-issued technology devices (iPads and/or Chromebooks). The student contract can be found on our website under School Committee Policies in [Section I \(Policy IJND, Exhibit IJND-E\)](#).

Cell Phones and other Electronics

Cell phones must be turned off and stored away during the school day. If a child needs to call their parent/guardian, they should ask the teacher or come to the office. Likewise, if a parent/guardian needs to contact a child during the day the parent/guardian should call the main office.

Smart watches or other personal technology devices that connect to the internet, capture audio or video may not be worn/used during the school day.

Any device that causes a distraction or used in violation of elementary handbook policy and procedures may be held in the office for parent/guardian pick up at a later time.

Student Photographs and Images

The ABRSD reserves the right to use images or video recordings of students, faculty or community members for internal use. Annually, the District requests parent consent to use student photos/images for external use.

Sometimes photographs, video footage, or other images of students are taken during school activities by the district or under its direction. The schools/District sometimes use these pictures/videos for publicity, fliers, school websites, and social media outlets such as Facebook or Twitter. Because the school welcomes parents/guardians and the community

to our school events, other parents/guardians and/or the media may photograph students, and we are not responsible for the content or posting of these pictures.

Behavioral Expectations and Discipline

We strive to make our schools positive, nurturing environments where students are valued members of a community of learners. We expect that elementary students will behave appropriately throughout their school day on the bus, in the hallways, in their classrooms, in the cafeteria, at recess and on the playground. This means that everyone in our schools—staff, students, parents/guardians, and volunteers—work to create learning communities where all children feel safe and respected. Any behaviors that cause substantial disruption to the learning/school environment will result in possible disciplinary actions.

Appropriate Dress and Appearance

In an effort to create and maintain an appropriate school atmosphere, students are expected to dress in a way that shows respect for themselves and others. Educators and administrators reserve the right to make decisions about attire that is deemed detrimental to a positive school climate and atmosphere. Students may not wear articles of clothing that could be considered offensive, disrespectful, discriminatory, suggestive, unsafe, or in any way disruptive to the learning environment. Although diversity is appreciated and the need for individual expression is respected, the safety and well being of students and staff is of utmost importance.

Please remember that proper attire is required for participation in all physical education classes. Sneakers are required and are the best choice for recess and outdoor activities.

These guidelines have been adapted from previous Junior High Handbooks to ease the transition between schools.

Are there any items that I can't bring to school?

According to state law and school policy, weapons of any kind, alcohol, illegal drugs, drug paraphernalia, tobacco (chewing or smoking) and vaporizer devices ("vape pens", "electronic cigarettes", etc.) are not allowed in school. In addition, any items that are disruptive to the educational process or that jeopardize one's health and safety are not allowed.

*The term "weapon" shall include, but not be limited to, any type of firearm, knife or martial arts equipment, cutting /sharp tool, explosive devices, including fireworks, or a replica of a dangerous weapon. Any dangerous weapon in the possession of a student shall be removed from the student's custody, and any illegal weapon shall be turned over to the Acton and Boxborough Police Departments. All other weapons may be returned to the parent/guardian at the discretion of the principal or their designee.

Student Rights: Due Process Procedures

Amended language of Section 37H3/4(b) (effective 11/08/2022)

For all conduct other than 37H and 37H1/2 violations: "Any principal, headmaster, superintendent or person acting as a decision-maker at a student meeting or hearing, when deciding the consequences for the student, shall consider ways to re-engage the student in the learning process; and shall not suspend or expel a student until alternative remedies have been employed and their use and results documented, following and in direct response to a specific incident or incidents, unless specific reasons are documented as to why such alternative remedies are unsuitable or counter-productive, and in cases where the student's continued presence in school would pose a specific, documentable concern about the infliction of serious bodily injury or other serious harm upon another person while in school.

Alternative remedies may include, but shall not be limited to: (i) mediation; (ii) conflict resolution; (iii) restorative justice; and (iv) collaborative problem solving. The principal, headmaster, superintendent or person acting as a decision-maker shall also implement school- or district-wide models to re-engage students in the learning process which shall include but

not be limited to: (i) positive behavioral interventions and supports models and (ii) trauma sensitive learning models; provided, however, that school- or district-wide models shall not be considered a direct response to a specific incident.”

In-School Suspension For Less Than 10 Cumulative Days During A School Year

An in-school suspension is a removal of a student from regular classroom activities, but not from the school premises. The procedure for an in-school suspension of no more than (10) school days (consecutive or cumulatively for multiple infractions during the school year) will be as follows:

1. The administrator will inform the student of the disciplinary offense charged, the basis for the charge, and provide the student an opportunity to respond. If the administrator determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the administrator will inform the student of the length of the student’s in-school suspension, which may not exceed 10 days, cumulatively or consecutively, in a school year.
2. On the same day as the in-school suspension decision, the administrator will make reasonable efforts to notify the parent orally of the disciplinary offense, the reasons for concluding that the student committed the infraction, and the length of the in-school suspension. The administrator will also invite the parent to a meeting to discuss the student’s academic performance and behavior, strategies for student engagement, and possible responses to the behavior. Such a meeting will be scheduled on the day of the suspension if possible, and if not, as soon thereafter as possible. If the administrator is unable to reach the parent after making and documenting at least (2) attempts to do so, such attempts will constitute reasonable efforts for purposes of orally informing the parent of the in-school suspension.
3. The administrator will send written notice to the student and parent about the in-school suspension, including the reason and the length of the in-school suspension, and inviting the parent to a meeting with the principal for the purpose set forth above, if such meeting has not already occurred. The administrator will deliver such notice on the day of the suspension by hand-delivery, certified mail, first-class mail, email to an address provided by the parent for school communications, or by other method of delivery agreed to by the administrator and the parent.

An in-school suspension of more than 10 cumulative days in a school year will be subject to the procedures for long-term suspension found.

Procedures for Short-Term, Out-Of-School Suspensions (10 Cumulative Days or Less in a School Year)

Except in the case of an Emergency Removal, prior to imposing a short-term out-of-school suspension (10 days or less in a school year) for conduct not covered by M.G.L. c. 71, §37H AND 37H ½, an administrator will provide the student and his/her parent/guardian oral and written notice and an opportunity to participate in an informal hearing.

1. **Notice:** The written notice to the student and the parent will be in English and in the primary language of the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate and will include the following:
 - a) the disciplinary offense;
 - b) the basis for the charge;
 - c) the potential consequences, including the potential length of the student’s suspension;
 - d) the opportunity for the student to have a hearing with the administrator concerning the proposed suspension, including the opportunity to dispute the charges and to present the student’s explanation of the alleged incident, and for the parent to attend the hearing;
 - e) the date, time, and location of the hearing;
 - f) the right of the student and the student’s parent to interpreter services at the hearing if needed to participate;

Written notice to the parent may be made by hand delivery, first-class mail, certified mail, email to an address provided by the parent for school communications, or any other method of delivery agreed to by the school and parent.

2. **Efforts to Involve Parents/Guardians:** The administrator will make reasonable efforts to notify the parent of the opportunity to attend the hearing. To conduct a hearing without the parent present, the administrator must be able to

document reasonable efforts to include the parent. The administrator is presumed to have made reasonable efforts if the administrator has sent written notice and has documented at least two (2) attempts to contact the parent in the manner specified by the parent for emergency notification.

3. **Format of Hearing:** The administrator will discuss the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, and any other pertinent information. The student also will have an opportunity to present information, including mitigating facts that the administrator should consider in determining whether other remedies and consequences may be appropriate. The administrator will provide the parent, if present, an opportunity to discuss the student's conduct and offer information, including mitigating circumstances, that the administrator should consider in determining consequences for the student.

4. **Decision:** The administrator will provide written notice to the student and parent of his/her determination and the reasons for it, and, if the student is suspended, the type and duration of suspension and the opportunity to make up assignments and such other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of removal. The notice of determination may be in the form of an update to the original written notice of hearing.

The parent or guardian shall be requested to attend a readmission conference with the principal or designee upon the student's return to school. At the principal's discretion, the conference may be held by telephone. Expectations for the student's reentry to school shall be outlined at this conference.

Procedures for Long -Term Suspension

Except in the case of an Emergency Removal, prior to imposing a long-term suspension (more than 10 days of suspension, whether in-school or out-of-school, whether consecutive or cumulative for multiple offenses during a school year), an administrator will follow the procedures for short-term suspension plus the following:

1. **Notice:** The notice will include all of the components for a short-term suspension, plus the following:
 - a) in advance of the hearing, the opportunity to review the student's record and the documents upon which the administrator may rely in making a determination to suspend the student or not;
 - b) the right to be represented by counsel or a layperson of the student's choice, at student's/parent's expense;
 - c) the right to produce witnesses on his or her behalf and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident, but the student may not be compelled to do so;
 - d) the right to cross-examine witnesses presented by the school district;
 - e) the right to request that the hearing be recorded by the administrator, and a copy of the audio recording provided to the student or parent upon request; and
 - f) the right to appeal the administrator's decision to impose long-term suspension to the superintendent.
2. **Format of Hearing:** The Hearing will afford the rights set forth in the notice above. The administrator will also provide the parent, if present, an opportunity to discuss the student's conduct and offer information, including mitigating circumstances, that the administrator should consider in determining consequences for the student.
3. **Decision:** Based on the evidence, the administrator will determine whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, after considering mitigating circumstances and alternatives to long-term suspension, what remedy or consequence will be imposed, in place of or in addition to a long-term suspension. The administrator will send the written determination to the student and parent by hand-delivery, certified mail, first-class mail, email to an address provided by the parent for school communications, or any other method of delivery agreed to by the school and the parent. If the administrator decides to suspend the student on a long-term basis, the written determination will:
 1. Identify the disciplinary offense, the date the hearing took place, and the participants at the hearing;
 2. Set out the key facts and conclusions reached;
 3. Identify the length and effective date of the suspension, as well as a date of return to school;
 4. Include notice of the student's opportunity to receive education services to make academic progress during the period of removal from school (if more than 10 cumulative days);
 5. Inform the student of the right to appeal the administrator's decision to the superintendent or designee. Notice of the right of appeal will be in English and the primary language of the home if other than English, or

other means of communication where appropriate, and will include the following information stated in plain language:

- a) the process for appealing the decision, including that the student or parent must file a written notice of appeal with the superintendent within five (5) calendar days of the effective date of the long-term suspension; provided that within the five (5) calendar days, the student or parent may request and receive from the superintendent an extension of time for filing the written notice for up to seven (7) additional calendar days; and that
- b) the long-term suspension will remain in effect unless and until the superintendent decides to reverse the administrator's determination on appeal.

No long-term suspension will extend beyond the end of the school year in which such suspension is imposed.

Exception for Emergency Removal

Notwithstanding the provisions for short or long-term suspension set forth above, a student who is charged with a disciplinary offense may be removed temporarily from school if the continued presence of the student poses a danger to persons or property, or materially and substantially disrupts the order of the school, and, in the administrator's judgment, there is no alternative available to alleviate the danger or disruption.

The administrator will immediately notify the superintendent in writing of the removal and the reason for it, and describe the danger [or disruption] by the student. The temporary removal will not exceed two (2) school days following the day of the emergency removal, during which time the administrator will provide the following, as applicable to the length of suspension:

- Make immediate and reasonable efforts to orally notify the student and the student's parent of the emergency removal, the reason for the need for emergency removal, and other applicable matters;
- Provide written notice to the student and parent, as applicable;
- Provide the student an opportunity for a hearing with the administrator, as applicable, and the parent an opportunity to attend the hearing, before the expiration of the two (2) school days, unless an extension of time for hearing is otherwise agreed to by the administrator, student, and parent.
- Render a decision orally on the same day as the hearing, and in writing no later than the following school day.

An administrator may not remove a student from school on an emergency basis for a disciplinary offense until adequate provisions have been made for the student's safety and transportation.

Appeal to The Superintendent

If a decision by an administrator, following the parent meeting, results in suspension of a student for more than 10 cumulative school days for the school year, the student may appeal the decision to the superintendent. In order to do so the student or parent must file a notice of appeal with the superintendent within five (5) calendar days with a seven (7) day postponement option. The superintendent must hold the hearing within three (3) school days of the student's request, unless the student or parent requests an extension of up to seven (7) additional calendar days. If the appeal is not filed within this time frame, the superintendent may deny the appeal, or may allow the appeal in his or her discretion, for good cause.

The following apply:

- The superintendent will make a good faith effort to include the parent in the hearing. The superintendent will be presumed to have made a good faith effort if he or she has made efforts to find a day and time for the hearing that would allow the parent and superintendent to participate. The superintendent will send written notice to the parent of the date, time, and location of the hearing.
- The superintendent will conduct a hearing to determine whether the student committed the disciplinary offense of which the student is accused, and if so, what the consequence will be. The superintendent will arrange for an audio recording of the hearing, a copy of which will be provided to the student or parent upon request. The

superintendent will inform all participants before the hearing that an audio record will be made of the hearing and a copy will be provided to the student and parent upon request.

- The student will have all the rights afforded the student at the administrator's hearing for long-term suspension.
- The superintendent will issue a written decision within five (5) calendar days of the hearing that meets the requirements for a long-term suspension. If the superintendent determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the superintendent may impose the same or a lesser consequence than the administrator, but will not impose a suspension greater than that imposed by the administrator's decision.

The decision of the superintendent constitutes the final decision of the school district.

Schoolwide Education Service Plan

In accordance with the Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, Sections 37H, 37H ½, and 37H ¾, the District must provide opportunities for students to earn credits, make up assignments, tests, papers, and other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of his or her in school suspension, short-term suspension (10 days or less), long-term suspension (10 days or more) or expulsion.

Any student who is expelled or long-term suspended from school, for more than ten (10) consecutive days, may access tutoring services for the duration of the school suspension. Students are expected to attend tutoring sessions at a designated public site identified by the school district. Qualified ABRSD personnel or contracted service providers will provide tutoring. It is the principal's responsibility to notify the students and their parent/guardian of the opportunity to receive education services and arranging such services at the time the student is expelled or placed in long-term suspension; and upon selection of an alternative education service by the student and the parent/guardian, the district's responsibility to facilitate and verify enrollment of the student in the education service.

The academic work will be consistent with the academic standards and curriculum frameworks established for all students under G.L. c. 69 §§1D and 1F. A student's tutoring schedule is by appointment and arranged weekly. Based upon the availability of qualified tutors, tutoring services may only be available before or after school hours. If parents/guardians have any questions, they should contact the building principal.

Discipline of Students with Disabilities

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and related regulations provide eligible students with certain procedural rights and protections in the context of student discipline.

In general, students with disabilities who violate school rules are subject to removal from their current placement for up to ten (10) consecutive school days to the extent that such a removal would be applied to students without disabilities.

This removal can occur without a prior determination of whether the conduct is a manifestation of the student's disability. Within 10 school days of the decision to remove the student for disciplinary reasons, the district, the parent/guardian and the district must review all relevant information in the student's file, including the child's IEP, any teacher observations, and any relevant information provided by the parents. Students may be removed for additional periods for up to ten (10) consecutive school days in the same school year for separate incidents of misconduct without a manifestation determination, as long as the removal does not constitute a "change in placement" as described below.

If the district, the parent, and relevant members of the child's IEP Team determine that the behavior was a direct result of the district's failure to implement the IEP, the district must take immediate steps to remedy those deficiencies; and The provision of written notice of procedural safeguards to parents upon the decision to suspend.

If the IEP Team, including the parent/guardian, determines the behavior was not a direct result of the student's disability, the school may discipline the student according to the school's code of student conduct, except that the district must continue to provide the student with educational services during the period of suspension or expulsion. However, if the Team determines that the behavior was a direct result of the disability, the student may not be excluded from the current educational placement (except in the case of weapons, drugs, or serious bodily injury) until the Team develops

and parent/guardian consent to a new Individualized Educational Program (IEP). The Team also must conduct a functional behavioral assessment and develop or revise a behavioral plan for the student as necessary.

A suspension of longer than ten (10) school days or a series of shorter-term suspensions that constitute a pattern are considered to represent a change in placement. Whether a pattern exists must be decided on a case-by-case basis, considering such factors as the length of each suspension, the nature of the alleged conduct, the proximity of the suspensions to one another, and the total amount of time the student is excluded from school. Prior to a suspension that constitutes a change in placement, the student's Team must meet to determine whether the behavior is a manifestation of the student's disability. In making this determination, the Team must review all relevant information in the student's file, including the IEP, teacher observations, and any relevant information provided by the parent/guardian, to determine if the conduct was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to the student's disability or was the direct result of any failure by the school to implement the IEP.

Any student who is removed from school for a disciplinary offense for more than ten (10) consecutive days will have an opportunity to receive educational services and make academic progress during the period of removal under the school-wide education service plan, and will so be informed at the time of the suspension/expulsion. When a student with a disability is excluded from their program for more than ten (10) school days in the school year, the district must provide the student with services to the extent necessary for progress in the general curriculum and/or towards Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals, as determined by the principal in consultation with at least one staff person who is a member of the student's IEP Team.

If an administrator imposes an out-of-school suspension for a student in preschool or in grades K through 3, the administrator will send to the superintendent a copy of the written determination and an explanation of the reasons therefore, before the out-of-school suspension takes effect.

In the event a student possesses, uses, sells or solicits a substance or possesses a weapon, or seriously injures an individual at school or a school function, the District may place a student in an interim alternative education setting (IAES) for up to 45 school days. Hearing officers may also order the placement of a student in an appropriate IAES for up to 45 school days upon determination that the current placement is substantially likely to result in injury to the student or others.

When a parent disagrees with the Team's decision on the manifestation determination or with a decision regarding placement, the parent has a right to request an expedited due process hearing with the Bureau of Special Education Appeals. Additional information regarding the procedural protections for special education students can be obtained from the Director of Special Education at 978-264-4700, extension 3265.

Discipline of Students Subject to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

Discipline of students with disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act provides students with disabilities certain procedural rights and protections in the context of student discipline. Prior to imposing a "significant change in placement" for disciplinary reasons, the district must determine whether the conduct is a manifestation of the student's disability. A significant change of placement results not only from an exclusion for more than 10 consecutive school days, but also from a pattern of shorter suspensions accumulating to more than 10 school days during a school year. Whether a pattern exists must be decided on a case-by-case basis, considering such factors as the length of each suspension, the nature of the alleged conduct, the proximity of the suspensions to one another, and the total amount of time the student is excluded from school.

Prior to any significant change in placement for disciplinary reasons, a group of individuals with knowledge of the student, the evaluation data, and the school program must determine whether the conduct at issue is related to the student's disability. If the conduct is directly related to the disability, the district will not impose the discipline and will develop an individual behavior management plan if the behavior significantly interferes with the student's ability to benefit from his/her education. If the conduct is not directly related to the student's disability, the district may discipline the student as it does general education students. Additional information regarding the procedural protections for

students eligible for services under laws providing for services for students with disabilities under Section 504 can be obtained from the Director of Special Education at 978-264-4700.

Discipline of Students Not Yet Determined Eligible

The IDEA protections summarized in this policy for students who are eligible for special education also apply to students who have not yet been found eligible for IEPs if the school district is deemed to have knowledge that the student was eligible for special education before the conduct that precipitated the disciplinary action occurred.

The IDEA provides that a school district is “deemed to have knowledge” if: (1) the child’s parent/guardian had expressed concern in writing to district supervisory or administrative personnel or the child’s teacher that the child needs special education and related services; (2) the child’s parent/guardian had requested an evaluation of the child to determine eligibility for special education services; or (3) the teacher of the child or other school district personnel had expressed specific concerns about a pattern of behavior by the child directly to the district’s director of special education or to other supervisory personnel. However, a school district is not “deemed to have knowledge” if the district evaluated the student and determined that the child was not eligible for special education services or the child’s parent refused an evaluation of the child or IDEA services.

If the school district has no knowledge that a student is an eligible student under the IDEA before taking disciplinary measures against the student, the student may be disciplined just as any other student may be. If, however, a request is made for an evaluation to determine eligibility while the student is subject to disciplinary measures, the district must conduct the evaluation in an expedited manner. Pending the results of the evaluation, the student must remain in the educational placement determined by the school authorities, which may include suspension or expulsion without services. If the student is determined eligible for an IEP as a result of the evaluation, the school district must provide the student with special education and related services in accordance with the IDEA.

Additional information regarding the procedural protections for students with special education services can be obtained from the Director of Special Education at 978-264-4700..

Additional District Policies (Including Regulations On Student Handbooks, Weapons, Smoking, Expulsion)

There are a number of additional School Committee policies related to student discipline, which can be found online at: https://www.abschools.org/school_committee/policies in Section J.

Physical Restraint

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School District complies with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s restraint regulations, 603 CMR 46.00 et seq. (“Regulations”), to the extent required by law. According to their terms, the Regulations apply not only at school but also at school-sponsored events and activities, whether or not on school property.

School staff may use physical restraint only (1) when non-physical interventions would be ineffective and the student’s behavior poses a threat of imminent, serious harm to self and/or others or (2) pursuant to a student’s IEP or other written plan developed in accordance with state and federal law and approved by the school and parent/guardian.

The regulations do not prevent a teacher, employee or agent of the District from using reasonable force to protect students, other persons or themselves from assault or imminent serious harm or from restraining students as otherwise provided in the regulations. Students, parents/guardians or guardians who have a complaint regarding physical restraint procedures may request a meeting with the building principal to discuss their concerns. If the issues are not resolved at this level, they may request a meeting with the Superintendent or designee.

Additional information can be obtained from the Director of Special Education at 978-264-4700.

Transportation

School Bus Behavior

School buses are an extension of the school, so students are under the District's jurisdiction while riding the bus.

- parent/guardian of student(s) must assume liability for any bus vandalism
- Bus drivers are not responsible for articles left on buses
- Bus rules apply to the regular daily buses to and from school and all field trips

Students shall observe the safety procedures below.

Riding the Bus

To ensure your safety while riding an ABRSD bus, we expect you to:

1. Follow the driver's instructions at all times.
2. Remain in your seat, facing forward, at all times.
3. Keep your hands and feet to yourself.
4. Keep all body parts, voice, and objects inside the bus at all times.
5. Use a quiet voice to speak to others sitting in a seat near you.
6. Use school-appropriate language.
7. No food, snacks and drinks on the bus at any time.
8. Open the window only when the driver has indicated it is safe to do so.
9. Ride only your assigned bus to and from your assigned stops.

Getting On or Off the Bus

To ensure your safety while getting on or off the bus, we expect you to:

1. Parents/guardians are responsible for the supervision of their students while getting to and waiting at the bus stop.
2. Line up in a single file to board the bus.
3. Wait until it has stopped completely and the driver signals (Thumbs Up) it is safe before approaching the bus. Walk to the bus. If you need to cross in front of the bus please walk at least 10 feet in front of the bus so the driver can see you at all times.
4. Find an appropriate vacant seat quickly and sit down.
5. Elementary students shall be seated by grade with youngest students in the front of the bus and oldest in the rear.
6. To exit the bus, wait until the bus has come to a complete stop. Leave your seat quickly and quietly, and wait patiently until it is your turn to get off the bus.
7. Use only the front exit of the bus. Exit the bus using the emergency door at the rear of the bus *only in the event of an emergency*.
8. Once you have gotten off the bus, walk away from it, not along the side of the bus.
9. If you must cross the street after getting off the bus, cross in front of the bus, at least 10 feet in front so that you and the driver can see each other. Look both ways and to the driver for the "Thumbs Up" before crossing the street for your own safety.

Students must also follow these guidelines:

1. Students may not light matches, smoke, vape, or consume alcohol on the bus per state law.
2. Parents/guardians shall assume liability for any bus vandalism.

3. Objects that create a hazard on the bus will not be permitted such as sharp objects, animals, or excessively large items which cannot be transported safely, or which cause an inconvenience to other passengers due to insufficient seating space. The Transportation Office reserves the right to make this determination.

STUDENTS' RIGHTS

Students will be given the opportunity to express their views to their building administrator prior to any disciplinary action being taken as a result of a formal complaint from a bus driver.

Students will be transported to their designated destination until such time that disciplinary action is taken. Drivers cannot make arbitrary decisions to discharge a student at a location other than the student's authorized destination.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION FOR BUS BEHAVIOR

Bus drivers have been instructed to prepare formal reports in the event of student misconduct on the bus. The following procedure will be followed after the report has been received by the building Administrator:

1. First Offense — Administrator speaks to the student and a first notice is sent home to parent/guardian. In addition, the Administrator will speak with the parent/guardian and/or send notice home explaining the situation and the potential consequences of a subsequent offense. In serious incidents, the Administrator may elect to suspend bus privileges.
2. Second Offense — Administrator speaks to student and a second notice is sent home. In serious incidents, the Administrator may elect to suspend bus privileges.
3. Subsequent Offenses — Administrator speaks to student and parent/guardian regarding suspension of bus privileges.
4. Violation of State Laws — (i.e., smoking, lighting matches, etc.) will result in a one (1) week suspension of bus privileges.

The Administrator will determine the time of suspension of bus privileges in all cases, based on the seriousness of the offense. In the case of an offense where a one-week suspension is required, he or she may decide to increase the length of the suspension.

If your child needs to report a bus incident, please encourage them to tell the bus driver as soon as possible so that the driver can fill out the formal report. Parent/guardian should encourage their children to report any incident to the adult receiving students at bus arrival.

PROHIBITION OF HARASSMENT (ABRSC Policy ACAB)

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School District (ABRSD) is committed to maintaining a school environment that values civil discourse and diversity where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect. Therefore, the District will take appropriate action to:

- Prevent and/or otherwise respond to demeaning behavior and unlawful discrimination or harassment of its employees or students, and
- Define processes by which individuals can bring concerns about unlawful discrimination or harassment to the Schools' attention for resolution.

ABRSD will not tolerate harassment of their employees or students. Harassment of staff or students based on race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, active military/veteran status, ancestry, or national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, employment policies, and other administered programs and activities is prohibited. In addition, students who are homeless or of limited English-speaking ability are protected from discrimination in accessing the course of study and other opportunities available through the schools.

It should be noted that while this policy sets forth the goal of promoting a work and educational environment that are free of harassment, the policy is not designed or intended to limit the authority of school officials to discipline or take remedial action for conduct which is deemed unacceptable, regardless of whether that conduct satisfies the definition of unlawful harassment.

Definition of Harassment

Harassment includes verbal or physical conduct which may offend, denigrate, or belittle any person because of, or due to, any of the characteristics described above. Harassment may include pictures, jokes, comments, innuendoes, slurs, derogatory remarks based on a protected characteristic or any other behavior which creates an environment that is intimidating, hostile, or offensive to anyone.

Investigations of Harassment

The District will promptly investigate every complaint of harassment, observing all relevant state and federal laws and regulations and school system policies and procedures, as well as applicable contractual requirements. *There are separate protocols for responding to complaints of allegations of sexual harassment against students, which are outlined in Procedure ACAB-R.*

Student or Staff Complaints

All District employees must respond to suspected harassment and to complaints by students of harassment by notifying the building principal or Title IX coordinator. Employees are expected to take every report of harassment seriously. A student or any individual wishing to file a complaint alleging harassment may inform any trusted staff member, their building principal, or the Title IX Coordinator listed below. The ABRSD Title IX Coordinator is:

Jennifer Faber, Director of Access and Engagement
Acton-Boxborough Regional School District
15 Charter Road, Acton, MA 01720
978-264-4700

Director for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the Deputy Superintendent are available to provide information about this policy and the District's complaint process.

Prohibition of Retaliation

It is unlawful to retaliate against, or discipline, any individual who files a complaint of harassment or discrimination, or who cooperates in an investigation of such a complaint. The Schools will not tolerate any such retaliation, and individuals who engage in retaliation will be subject to termination/expulsion or other sanctions determined by the School Administration and/or School Committee, subject to applicable school system policies and procedures, as well as applicable contractual requirements.

PROHIBITION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Definition of Sexual Harassment

While all types of harassment are prohibited, sexual harassment requires particular attention. Pursuant to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, ABRSD has a Grievance Process for investigating and resolving Formal Complaints of Sexual Harassment (Refer to Procedure ACAB-R.).

In Massachusetts, Sexual Harassment is defined as any unwelcome sexual conduct, including sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

1. Submission to, acceptance of, or rejection of such advances, requests, or conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment or education or a basis for employment decisions affecting an employee or for educational, disciplinary, or other decisions affecting a student; or

2. Such advances, requests, or conduct have the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance, education or participation in extracurricular activities by creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, or offensive work or school environment.

According to Title IX, sexual harassment is conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

1. An ABRSD employee conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the recipient on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct;
2. Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to ABRSD's education programs or activities; or
3. Sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking (all as defined by federal laws.)

While it is not possible to list all circumstances that may constitute sexual harassment, the following are examples of prohibited conduct at ABRSD:

- Unwelcome sexual advances -- whether they involve physical touching or not;
- Sexual epithets, jokes, written or oral references to sexual conduct, gossip regarding one's sex life; comments about an individual's body, sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess;
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, cartoons;
- Unwelcome leering, whistling, touching, brushing against the body, sexual gestures, suggestive or insulting comments;
- Inquiries into one's sexual experiences, and
- Discussion of one's sexual activities
- Taking or posting of photographs, videos or images of a sexual nature without consent

The Title IX Coordinator is responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy, its procedures, and federal regulations. Any ABRSD employee with knowledge of alleged sexual harassment, must report it, whether they personally witness the sexual harassment, learn of it from a third party, or they are the alleged victim themselves. ABRSD will promptly respond to all reports alleging sexual harassment to ensure a fair and equitable resolution to the report, provide support to the victim, eliminate harassment, and impose discipline if necessary. Discipline may range from verbal reprimand to suspension and expulsion or termination in the case of an employee.

Title IX Coordinator

The Title IX Coordinator is responsible for ensuring the District's proper response to sexual harassment, compliance with Title IX and overseeing the Grievance Process. ABRSD's Title IX Coordinator is the Director of Access and Engagement, who can be reached at 978-264-4700 or at 15 Charter Rd., Acton, MA 01720.

Contact Information for State & Federal Agencies

The Schools urge all individuals in the school community to bring any concerns or complaints of harassment to the attention of school personnel so that they can be addressed. If either party to the complaint is dissatisfied with the results or progress of the Schools' investigation, they may discuss this directly with the Superintendent of Schools.

The state agency responsible for enforcing laws that prohibit harassment in the workplace is the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD), One Ashburton Place, Suite 601, Boston, MA 02108-1518; telephone (617) 994-6000; TTY Users (617) 994-6196. The time frame for filing a complaint with the MCAD is within 300 days from the date of the most recent incident of alleged harassment. The state agency responsible for ensuring that Massachusetts public schools do not discriminate on the basis of protected characteristics is the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906; telephone (781) 338-3300; TTY Users (800) 439-2370. The MA DESE's Program Quality Assurance Services (PQA) accepts complaints when the alleged violation occurred no more than one year before PQA received the written complaint.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is the federal agency that enforces federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination. The deadline for filing a complaint with the EEOC is within 300 days from the day of the alleged discrimination. The EEOC is located at JFK Federal Bldg., 475 Government Center, Boston, MA 02203; (617) 565-3200 or (800) 669- 4000; TTY Users (800) 669-6820. The US Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) is a federal agency that enforces five federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability and age in programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance from the US Department of Education. In most cases, a complaint must be filed with OCR within 180 calendar days of the date of the alleged discrimination. OCR is located on the 8th Floor, 5 Post Office Square, Boston, MA 02109-3921; telephone (617) 289-0111, fax (617) 289-0150.

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L. 151B:3A
Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972
BESE 603 CMR 26:00
34 CFR 106.44 (a), (a)-(b)
34 CFR 106.45 (a)-(b) (1)
34 CFR 106.45 (b)(2)-(b)(3,4,5,6,7) as revised through June 2020

Revised and Approved – September 17, 2020

HARASSMENT- PROCEDURES (ABRSC Procedures ACAB-R)

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School District (ABRSD) is committed to maintaining a school environment that values civil discourse and diversity and in which all individuals are treated with dignity and respect. ABRSD will not tolerate harassment of staff or students. Harassment of staff or students based on race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, active military/veteran status, ancestry, or national or ethnic origin in the administration of ABRSD's educational policies, employment policies, and other administered programs and activities is prohibited. In addition, students who are homeless or of limited English-speaking ability are protected from discrimination in accessing the courses of study and other opportunities available through the District.

Definition of Harassment

Harassment includes verbal or physical conduct which may offend, denigrate, or belittle any person because of, or due to, any of the categories or characteristics set forth above. Harassment includes pictures, jokes, comments, innuendoes, slurs, derogatory remarks based on a protected category, and any other behavior which creates an environment that is intimidating, hostile, or offensive.

Prohibition Against Retaliation

It is unlawful to retaliate against, or discipline, any individual who files a complaint of harassment or discrimination, or who cooperates in the investigation of such a complaint. The Schools will not tolerate any such retaliation, and individuals who engage in retaliation will be subject to termination/expulsion or other sanctions determined by the School Administration and/or School Committee, subject to applicable policies and procedures, as well as applicable contractual requirements.

Staff or Student Complaints

Any individual wishing to file a complaint alleging harassment may inform any trusted staff member or a supervisor. If an employee does not wish to discuss the issue with a supervisor or feels that the problem is not addressed in an effective manner, the employee should contact the Employee Title IX Coordinator:

Director of Access and Engagement
Acton-Boxborough Regional School District

Director of Access and Engagement and the Deputy Superintendent as listed above are also available to provide information about procedures applicable to this policy.

Investigation, Corrective Action & Closure of a Harassment Complaint

Director of Access and Engagement and/or the Deputy Superintendent will coordinate all investigations. Typical investigative steps include separate interviews with those involved, reducing statements from all parties to writing, identifying and questioning witnesses, and taking other appropriate actions. The investigation will be conducted with as much confidentiality and privacy for all parties as possible without compromising the thoroughness of the investigation.

The Schools/District will endeavor to complete the investigation within thirty (30) school days of receiving the complaint, unless the nature of the investigation or exigent circumstances dictate otherwise, in which case the investigation will be completed as quickly as practicable. Additionally, if the respondent is subject to a collective bargaining agreement that sets forth a specific timeline for notice and/or investigation of a complaint, such timeline will be followed.

If after investigation, a determination is made that harassment, participation in harassment, or retaliation for complaining about harassment has occurred, the Schools/District will promptly take appropriate action to end the offending conduct and ensure that it is not repeated. Depending on the severity of the incident(s), such corrective action may include counseling, training, a verbal or written warning, suspension, or termination/expulsion.

The District will comply with all legal requirements governing the reporting of suspected cases of child abuse.

When the Schools/District have completed the investigation, school personnel will, to the extent appropriate, inform the person filing the complaint of the results of that investigation and will file a report with the Coordinator for Title IX/Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act/Chapter 622.

PROCEDURE FOR REPORTS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Pursuant to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, ABRSD has a Grievance Procedure for investigating and resolving allegations of Sexual Harassment. ABRSD will promptly respond to all reports alleging sexual harassment to ensure a fair and equitable resolution to the report, provide support to the victim, eliminate harassment, and impose discipline if necessary pursuant to District policies.

According to Title IX, sexual harassment is conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

1. An ABRSD employee conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the recipient on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct;
2. Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to ABRSD's education programs or activities; or
3. Sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking (all as defined by Federal laws.)

While it is not possible to list all circumstances that may constitute sexual harassment, the following are examples of prohibited conduct at ABRSD:

- Unwelcome sexual advances - whether they involve physical touching or not;
- Sexual epithets, jokes, written or oral references to sexual conduct, gossip regarding one's sex life; comment on an individual's body, comment about an individual's sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess;
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, cartoons;
- Unwelcome leering, whistling, brushing against the body, sexual gestures, suggestive or insulting comments;
- Inquiries into one's sexual experiences, and
- Discussion of one's sexual activities

- Taking or posting of photographs, videos or images of a sexual nature without consent

Complaints of Sexual Harassment

Any individual wishing to file a complaint alleging harassment may inform any trusted staff member, a supervisor, or the Assistant Superintendent for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Any staff member who receives such a report is required to report it to an administrator. If an employee does not wish to discuss the issue with a supervisor or feels that the problem is not addressed in an effective manner, the employee should contact the Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator is responsible for ensuring the District's proper response to sexual harassment, compliance with Title IX and overseeing the Grievance Process. ABRSD's Title IX Coordinator is:

Director of Access and Engagement
15 Charter Rd., Acton, MA 01720
978-264-4700

Response to Sexual Harassment

A student or any individual wishing to report sexual harassment may inform the Title IX Coordinator or any other employee. Any District employee with knowledge of an allegation of sexual harassment, must report it, whether they personally witness the sexual harassment, learn of it from a third party or the alleged victim themselves.

Once the Title IX Coordinator learns of an allegation of sexual harassment, they will contact the alleged victim, or "the Complainant," to gather preliminary information, offer "Supportive Measures," and inform that person of the right to file a "Formal Complaint" against the alleged perpetrator, or "the Respondent," that initiates the Title IX "Grievance Process."

A "Formal Complaint" is a document filed by the Complainant or signed by the Title IX Coordinator alleging sexual harassment against a respondent and requesting that ABRSD investigate the allegation of sexual harassment and initiate the Grievance Process. Formal Complaints may be filed with the Title IX Coordinator in person, by mail, or electronic mail. To file a Formal Complaint, the alleged sexual harassment must have occurred in the school's district educational programming or activity, and within the United States.

In some circumstances, the District will dismiss a Formal Complaint. The District has discretion to dismiss a Formal complaint where the passage of time results in an inability to gather sufficient evidence for a determination of responsibility, the district lost responsibility over the Respondent. The District must dismiss the Formal complaint if it does not constitute sexual harassment as complicated by Title IX. However, the school may investigate the conduct as it pertains to other school policies.

"Supportive Measures" are non-disciplinary, non-punitive individualized services offered as appropriate, as reasonably available, and without fee or charge to the complainant or the respondent before or after the filing of a formal complaint or where no formal complaint has been filed. Such Measures are designed to restore or preserve equal access to ABRSD education and activities, including measures designed to protect the safety of all or the educational environment, or deter sexual harassment.

ABRSD will maintain the confidentiality of any Supportive Measures to the extent possible and document the supportive measures offered by the Title IX Coordinator to the Complainant and Respondent. Examples of supportive measures include, but are not limited to the following: counseling, deadline extensions, course adjustments, work or schedule modifications, and increased security.

Grievance Process

Once the Formal Complaint is filed, the "Grievance Process" commences. ABRSD is committed to treating all parties equitably during the Grievance Process. ABRSD is committed to completing the Grievance Process as soon as possible with the goal of completion within 60 days. However, if required, by good cause, such as the absence of a party, a party's advisor, or a witness; law enforcement or DCF involvement; or the need for accommodations, the parties will be notified of the need for delay.

ABRSD will provide the Complainant and Respondent with written notice of the allegations and the Grievance Process. This notice will include specific detail of the allegations against the Respondent. The parties will be informed at this time of their right to have an advisor of their choice, who may be, but is not required to be, an attorney, and may accompany them at any point during the process. They will also be informed of their right to inspect and review evidence. ABRSD will remind the parties of the school's prohibition against knowingly making false statements during this process. The Respondent is presumed not responsible for the alleged conduct until a determination of responsibility has been made. Supportive measures are available to all parties during the Grievance Process.

The Title IX Grievance Process requires the involvement of several different employees that fulfill separate roles. As noted earlier, the Title IX Coordinator oversees Title IX compliance and the Grievance Process. Additionally, each Formal Complaint will be assigned an "Investigator," who could be a Principal, Vice-Principal, or other employee that is properly trained in investigations. Each Title IX investigation will be assigned a "Decision-Maker," which similarly could be a Principal, Vice-Principal, or other employee that is properly trained. All appeals will be reviewed by someone who was involved in the underlying Title IX investigation.

ABRSD will ensure that Title IX coordinators, investigators, Decision-Makers, and any person who facilitates an informal resolution process, receives training on Title IX policy and procedure and his or her respective role.

Informal Resolution of Sexual Harassment

If appropriate, the Title IX Coordinator will offer the parties the option of an informal resolution process, but, pursuant to Title IX, not until a Formal Complaint has been filed and the parties have been fully advised of their Title IX rights. Before beginning an informal resolution process, ABRSD will obtain written consent from the Complainant and Respondent. At any time, the parties can withdraw from the informal resolution and the Grievance Process will resume. Informal Resolution shall not be offered in the event the Respondent is an ABRSD employee.

Investigation of Sexual Harassment

A properly trained Investigator will complete an investigation into the Formal Complaint. Both the Respondent and Complainant, will have an equal opportunity to present witnesses and other evidence. Prior to any interviews with a witness, ABRSD will provide the witness with notice of the date, time, location, participants, and sufficient time to prepare for that interview. Both parties will have an equal opportunity to examine and inspect evidence. Unless waived by one of the parties, the investigation will not intrude on any information legally protected as privileged. Questions and evidence about a person's sexual predisposition or prior sexual behavior are not relevant, unless it is offered to prove that someone other than the Respondent committed the alleged act, or the questions and evidence concern specific incidents of sexual behavior between the parties and it is offered to prove consent. At the conclusion of the investigation, the Investigator will create an Investigative Report that summarizes the relevant evidence and send it to each party and the party's advisor.

The parties will have 10 days before any hearing or determination of responsibility to review and respond to the report if they so choose. Time periods may be extended or delayed for good cause, including the absence of a party, a party's advisor, or a witness; concurrent law enforcement activity; or the need for language assistance or accommodations of disabilities.

The designated Decision-Maker will afford each party the opportunity to submit written, relevant questions that a party wants asked of any party or witness, provide each party with the answers, and allow for additional, limited follow-up questions. The Decision-Maker, who will first evaluate the relevancy of each question. In the event that the Decision-Maker decides to exclude a question, they will provide a written decision explaining their reasoning.

Hearings

Though it is not required, ABRSD reserves the right to conduct a full-live hearing as part of the Grievance Process. At such a hearing, the Decision-Maker will permit each party's Advisor to ask the other party and any witnesses relevant questions. If a party does not have an advisor, ABRSD will provide one at no cost. Upon the request of the Complainant or Respondent, the ABRSD will utilize technology to separate the parties during the hearing process. If a party or witness

does not submit to cross-examination at the live hearing, the Decision-Maker will not consider any statement of that party or witness in determining responsibility.

Finding of Responsibility

Any Respondent found, by a preponderance of the evidence, to have committed Sexual Harassment shall be subject to a range of discipline, including, but not limited to: detention, exclusion of extracurricular activities, suspension, and expulsion, or in the case of an employee discipline, suspension, or termination of employment.

The Decision-Maker will simultaneously issue a written determination of responsibility that includes a description of the allegations, the procedural steps of the grievance process, the findings of facts, the conclusions reached, and a statement and rationale of responsibility and related discipline. If applicable, it will also include remedies designed to restore or preserve equal access to education and activities at ABRSD.

Appeal

Both the Complainant and Respondent shall have the right to appeal the decision of the Grievance Process by notifying the Title IX coordinator in writing within 10 business days of receiving the decision. The grounds for appeal are limited to: procedural irregularity, new evidence that was not reasonably available at the time of the determination or dismissal, or an alleged conflict of interest. Both parties shall have an opportunity to provide a written statement supporting their position on Appeal. The Appeal shall be reviewed by a person who is not the original decision-maker, investigator, or Title IX Coordinator. That person shall issue a written decision and rationale simultaneously to the parties.

Retaliation

ABRSD strictly prohibits retaliation in any form against persons seeking protection under or participating in an investigation related to this policy. As such, the District will investigate any reports of retaliation and take separate disciplinary action against those found to have retaliated against someone.

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L. 151B:3A
Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972
BESE 603 CMR 26:00
34 CFR 106.44 (a), (a)-(b)
34 CFR 106.45 (a)-(b) (1)
34 CFR 106.45 (b)(2)-(b)(3,4,5,6,7) as revised through June 2020

Revised and Updated – September 17, 2020

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy

Links to [District *Bullying Prevention & Intervention Policy*](#) and [District *Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan*](#)

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School District (hereinafter referred to as “The District”) recognizes that safe learning environments are necessary for students to learn and achieve high academic standards. The District strives to provide and maintain safe learning and working environments for all students and all employees. It is the conviction of educators that all students have the right to participate confidently and fully in learning activities, both in and out of school, and contribute meaningfully to society by learning in a community culture where individual and developmental differences are acknowledged, appreciated and respected.

Bullying is defined as the act of one or more individuals intimidating one or more persons through electronic, written, verbal, physical acts, either direct or indirect, mental and/or visual, when such intentional behavior substantially interferes with a student’s education, threatens the overall educational environment, and/or substantially disrupts the operation of the school. These behaviors include maliciously teasing, taunting, name-calling, sexual remarks, stealing or damaging an individual’s possessions, spreading rumors, or encouraging others to reject or exclude someone. This intentional behavior includes but is not limited to harassment, intimidation, and bullying based upon race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, economic status, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, marital status, physical

appearance, or mental, physical or sensory disability. Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, who provides information during an investigation of bullying, or who is witness to or has reliable information about bullying is prohibited. This prohibition shall apply to all District employees, contractors, volunteers, parent/guardian, and students, including conduct between/among all parties.

The School Committee expects administrators to make clear to students and staff that bullying behaviors (as defined above) in the school building, on school grounds, on the bus or school-sanctioned transportation, or at school-sponsored functions will not be tolerated and will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including suspension and expulsion for students, and termination for employees.

Furthermore, the District will immediately investigate allegations of bullying, including cyber-bullying, intimidation, and/or harassment. The Principal of each building, or his/her designee, will be responsible for responding to all complaints by students alleging harassment, including bullying, in accordance with harassment. If it is determined that bullying has occurred, the District will take appropriate action to end the bullying and ensure that it is not repeated. In this regard, schools will remain sensitive to the confidentiality of all parties, but may not be able to preserve fully the confidential nature of the allegation.

All schools in Acton-Boxborough will include a bullying prevention and intervention plan that is proactive and educational, in keeping with the guidelines published by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The district is committed to supporting each school in their adoption of a school-wide bullying prevention and intervention program by providing the necessary funding, training and staff time. Each school is directed to develop or adopt a research based bullying prevention program and/or curriculum that include the major components listed in the Bullying Prevention and Intervention procedures. Additionally, bullying prevention and intervention will include school based teams responsible for the systematic tracking, monitoring and evaluation of the school based Bullying Prevention program with special emphasis on analyzing incidents for systemic intervention at the school building level and the school system at large.

Each Team will:

- Consist of members of the already existing Safety Team appointed by the Principal representing the following constituents: Building Principal or Assistant Principal, Teacher representatives, Counselor/Psychologist/SPED.
- Additional collaboration from administration and/or School Nurse.
- Meet a minimum of two times during the school year.
- By October 1st of each year:
 - Distribute Policy and procedures to all students, parent/guardian, faculty and staff (student handbook, annual written notice, website, employee handbook, etc.)
 - Notify the Superintendent of Schools in writing of their school's compliance with this Policy and submit a copy of the bullying prevention and intervention procedures adopted for each school.
- Yearly, monitor and review the effectiveness of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Procedures.
- By June of each year, provide a brief annual summary to the Superintendent of Schools regarding the implementation of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy with recommendations for building based enhancements/improvements.

The Superintendent or designated representative has operational responsibility for the Districts' implementation of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy.

Procedures and Guidelines

Bullying is defined as the act of one or more individuals intimidating one or more persons through electronic, written, verbal, physical acts, either direct or indirect, mental and/or visual, when such intentional behavior substantially interferes with a student's education, threatens the overall educational environment, and/or substantially disrupts the operation of the school. These behaviors include maliciously teasing, taunting, name-calling, sexual remarks, stealing or damaging an individual's possessions, spreading rumors, or encouraging others to reject or exclude someone. This intentional behavior includes but is not limited to harassment, intimidation, and bullying based upon race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, economic status, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, marital status, physical

appearance, or mental, physical or sensory disability. Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, who provides information during an investigation of bullying, or who is witness to or has reliable information about bullying is prohibited. This prohibition shall apply to all District employees, contractors, volunteers, parent/guardian, and students, including conduct between/among all parties.

Peer conflict involves disagreement and oppositional interactions which are situational, immediate, and developmentally appropriate. These latter behaviors, with adult guidance and modeling, assist in developing new skills in social competency, learning personal boundaries and conflict resolution strategies.

All schools will include a bullying prevention and intervention plan that is proactive and educational. Major components include:

- Development of a community culture that publicly communicates that bullying is unacceptable in any form.
- Commitment to a pro-social, research-based curriculum and/or program that promotes positive peer relations.
- Commitment to addressing the needs of the victim concurrently with the on-going investigation and response to the bully.
- Annual discussion of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy with students (no later than October 1st of each year).
- Adequate supervision of students to address bullying prevention and intervention.
- Ongoing training and support of teachers and school staff in the use of proactive and effective strategies for responding to bullying and supporting bystanders and victims.
- Systematic review of the overall bullying prevention and intervention approaches used by the school.

As used in the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy, bullying can be any intentional written, electronic, verbal or physical act or actions against a student, school volunteer or school employee that a reasonable person, under the circumstances should know will have the effect of:

- A. causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim's property;
- B. places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property;
- C. creates a hostile environment at school for the victim;
- D. infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or
- E. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Reporting Requirements:

A culture of openness is considered the most effective means for countering this behavior. It is the responsibility of each member of the school community: students, staff and parent/guardian to report instances of bullying or suspicions of bullying, with the understanding that such reports will be listened to and taken seriously.

- A. Any school employee that has reliable information that would lead a reasonable person to suspect that a person is a target of bullying shall immediately report it to the administration. This includes custodians, cafeteria workers, recess and bus monitors.
- B. Each school is required to have a procedure for the administration to promptly investigate in a timely manner and determine whether or not bullying has occurred.
- C. If an incident of bullying or retaliation involves students from more than one school district, commonwealth charter school, or non-public school, a school administrator shall promptly notify the appropriate administrator of the other school or district so that both may take appropriate action.
- D. All confirmed bullying incidents must be reported to parent/guardians and must be documented. In addition, the administrator must be aware that some acts of bullying may also be a crime and required to be reported to law enforcement.

Investigative procedures:

Each school is required to investigate in a timely manner and determine whether or not bullying has occurred. This requires a determination as to the nature of the incident (bullying v. peer conflict). Once determined, an investigation and outreach to the victim and family shall occur concurrently with a commitment to addressing the needs of the victim,

identifying and educating bystanders, and providing formative/educational consequences for bullies. Steps to be taken should include:

- A. Determine the nature, chronicity, and severity of the presenting situation.
- B. Identify aggressor(s), target(s), and bystanders
- C. Provide a safety and comfort plan for the target(s).
- D. Identify whether or not the bullying has occurred on or off campus.
- E. Immediately remind the alleged student aggressor, target, and witnesses of the importance of the investigation, their obligation to be truthful and that retaliation against someone who reports bullying or provides information during a bullying investigation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.
- F. Have conversations with all parties.
- G. Inform parents, guardians and all relevant adults of initial investigation; notice of confidentiality.
- H. Establish a timetable for following up with parents, especially parents of target(s).
- I. Collection and documentation of data.

Non-Classroom Supervision:

Each school must supervise non-classroom areas. The review and exchange of information regarding non-classroom areas are important to:

- A. Determine locations that bullying may more likely occur.
- B. Consider ways of keeping certain groups or students apart during transitions, or building positive collaborations between older and younger students.
- C. Consider adult density in location if necessary.

Consequences from Findings:

Consequences for bullying should be immediately and consistently applied and must be delivered in a non-hostile manner. Consequences should be disagreeable or uncomfortable but should not involve revenge or hostile punishment.

Consequences should take into consideration:

- A. Nature, severity, and chronicity of the behavioral impact on the victim
- B. Degree of physical, psychological, social harm on the victim
- C. Student's age, development and degree of maturity
- D. Surrounding circumstances and context in which the incident(s) occurred
- E. Prior disciplinary history and continuing patterns of behavior
- F. Relationship between and among the parties involved
- G. Context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred
- H. The need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior.

The appropriate range of consequences, subject to due process where appropriate, is as follows:

- A. Verbal reprimand
- B. Temporary removal from the classroom
- C. Loss of privileges, including before and after school activities
- D. Time-out
- E. Notice to parent
- F. Supervised break times
- G. Detention
- H. In-school suspension
- I. Out-of-school suspension
- J. Reassignment of seats in lunch, bus, class, etc.
- K. Reassignment of classes
- L. Referral to an outside agency
- M. Reassignment to another school or another mode of transportation

- N. Expulsion
- O. Report to law enforcement

In addition, formative activities will be given, which may include:

- A. Reparation to the victim (recognizing that direct apology may be contraindicated)
- B. Completion of curricular based assignment(s)
- C. Meeting with Civil Rights Coordinator
- D. Completion of community service designed to help the perpetrator understand and respect differences; written report required by the perpetrator
- E. Therapeutic support for both aggressor and targets

Professional Development

The District will provide a combined bullying prevention and intervention training each year for all employees to help them identify and respond to bullying, teasing and harassment. Continual on-going coaching for administrators will be provided to enhance the skill set of teachers and staff. In addition, schools are encouraged to offer education to parents/guardians about bullying prevention. This requires a common language to be presented.