



**Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools**

***Understanding Course Selection***

***at***

***R. J. Grey Junior High School***

***and***

***Acton-Boxborough Regional High School***

***For 2026-2027 School Year***

<http://abschools.org>

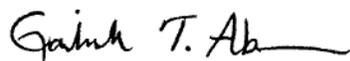
Dear Acton Boxborough families,

What an exciting time for your family as your child(ren) prepares to transition for either their elementary school setting to the Junior High or from the Junior High to the High School. Both the Junior High and High School are special learning communities and we hope that you find this transition to be supportive of your questions and needs.

In order to help families / caregivers make informed decisions about the course placement options available for their children, we provide families / caregivers of incoming 7<sup>th</sup> graders with information regarding the course selection process in general. In addition, information is provided from the mathematics, English, history/social sciences, science, world language, performing arts, visual arts, and physical education/health departments in time for the spring course selection process.

This document is not produced as a hard copy; however, it is posted on the Acton-Boxborough [website](#) and updated annually.

Questions about how to navigate course selection within a given subject area should be directed to the contact person(s) identified in each section. Please refer any general comments or concerns about this document to:



Gabrielle Abrams, Ed.D.  
Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning  
[gabrams@abschools.org](mailto:gabrams@abschools.org)  
Phone: 978-264-3313

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## HOW TO TRANSLATE THIS DOCUMENT

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Parents/guardians and educators are keenly aware that students undergo social, physical and intellectual development on their own unique timetable. During early adolescence – the time encompassed by the end of elementary school, the move through junior high and on to high school – that divergence of timetables both between and within individual youth can be really remarkable.

Against this reality of physical and personal development, the schools attempt the challenging task of providing students with an academic program consistent with their learning needs and interests. To meet the needs of developmentally and otherwise diverse learners, teachers have developed an array of classroom strategies. Through group work, independent projects, collaborative learning, and numerous other techniques, teachers support students' growth and skill development.

In this document, we seek to provide parents/guardians with background information about the course leveling approach in each department that clarifies:

- How leveled courses differ from one another.
- The criteria upon which teachers recommend students for leveled courses.
- Important academic/curricular implications associated with being placed in a course at a given level.
- The process by which parents/guardians can override level placements.

### **Issues to Keep in Mind as You Consider Level Placements for Your Student**

Some students learn at the same level across all discipline areas. Many others have stronger interest in one or two areas. It often makes sense for students to take classes in different disciplines at different levels. By varying the level, students can challenge themselves appropriately, and they can leave time in their lives for extracurricular, family, and social activities. Only a small percentage of ABRHS students take all-honors schedules.

Students' abilities, interests and commitments evolve over time. Those who would like to move at some future date to another level course in a particular discipline area may be able to do so. This document describes what is entailed in each discipline area to make such a change.

**Outside reading makes a difference.** If you want to help your child learn, encourage reading and model reading yourself. Reading broadens horizons, deepens understanding, and sharpens intellectual faculties. If children make a habit of it, reading will also improve their academic achievement. The instructional leaders agree that the paramount skill for academic success is reading.

Proficient readers tend to succeed across many disciplines because they have good comprehension: of text in general, of textbooks, of test questions. Their breadth of vocabulary enhances their grasp of nuance. Habitual pleasure readers bring a breadth of context to many disciplines – literature, history, the social sciences, science, the arts, and world language – to which they can more easily add new knowledge. Skillful reading tends to kindle the curiosity and imagination for learning. Writing and reasoning skills, maturity, and motivation all play a role in academic success at the high school level, but reading above all provides a grounding for academic success as maturity and motivation grow.

**Doubling Up:** Within a given academic year, students at the high school often “double up” (i.e., take more than one course within a single department). Thus, a student enrolled in Chemistry might also enroll in Marine Biology; another student enrolled in U.S. History might double up by enrolling in Psychology; a third might enroll in Spanish and French simultaneously. Given the number of courses that most students must take within each discipline in order to meet college entrance requirements, there are limits to how much doubling up is possible within a given discipline area. But doubling up is one of the best ways for a student to “dig deeper” within a given academic area.

## TEACHER LEVEL RECOMMENDATION AND OVERRIDE PROCESSES

The criteria by which students are placed in particular levels vary from subject to subject. Also, the implications of placements are different in each subject area. However, some aspects of the placement process apply across subject areas.

### The Placement Process at R. J. Grey

The Junior High Mathematics Department levels its courses starting in grade 8. In March, 7<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics teachers make level-placement recommendations for grade 8. Math level recommendations for 8<sup>th</sup> grade will be listed in the PowerSchool parent portal when the registration process is open. Parents/guardians will have a specified period of time to either accept or override the placement recommendations.

- Teachers make recommendations on a variety of factors to place students in the class that will best strengthen the individual student's understanding of math. Parents/guardians with questions are encouraged to discuss the recommendation with the teacher to understand the reason behind the recommendation.
- If, after a discussion with the teacher, the parent/guardian still wishes for their student to be enrolled in a different level, they have the right to initiate a placement override. To do so, the parents/guardians must:
  1. Express interest in overriding the recommendation via the PowerSchool Parent Portal
  2. Families must submit their override request via the online form by the stated deadline. No exceptions or extensions can be granted. The Junior High School determines the number of classes for the following year based on the number of students signed up for each at that point. **We cannot accept overrides after this because it would create unbalanced classes.**
  3. By completing and submitting an override request, parents/guardians are indicating that they realize this was not the recommended placement and take responsibility for this decision.

### The Placement Process at ABRHS

Our hope is that all of our students will develop schedules that provide an appropriate level of challenge for them. Because there is no single "right" answer about what courses to take, we have tried to design a process that allows for thoughtful communication and interaction among students and adults in order to ensure that each student has a collection of courses that is appropriate, balanced, interesting, and challenging.

#### Scheduling Process

Our Student Course Request (SCR) process is designed to meet the goals outlined above. The process begins in late winter when the online *Program of Studies* is made available to students.

As a first step, students should discuss their goals and interests with their teachers, who will make recommendations for course levels based on the students' performance in their classes. These recommendations will be available to students and families via the PowerSchool Student and Parent/Guardian Portal. Students, with the help of their parents/guardians, will then choose elective courses to round out the core courses recommended by teachers.

On occasion, students become interested in “overriding” a teacher recommendation. Those overrides should be undertaken thoughtfully after significant discussion with school personnel and parents/guardians. **Students in grades 9-11** will have access to an electronic Override Form on the school website and will complete it with input from the Department Leader, their teacher, and counselor. **Parents/Guardians of students in grade 8** will also have access to an Override Form and should complete it as described. High School Department Leaders will reach out to families as needed to discuss the override requests.

All changes after registration week must be made through the Counseling Center.

There are deadlines that apply for all course change requests. Please see current information to determine those for the coming year. Go to the Transition to 9th Grade site on the high school website: [Acton-Boxborough Regional High School](#) for this and other information.

### **UNDERSTANDING THE DISTRICT APPROACH TO COURSE LEVELING AND COURSE SELECTION IN MATH, ENGLISH, SCIENCE, SOCIAL STUDIES, AND WORLD LANGUAGE**

*Given changes in such areas as curriculum, staff, demography, and standardized testing, the information provided in this section is subject to change on an annual basis.*

#### **MATHEMATICS**

The mathematics curriculum at RJ Grey and ABRHS follows closely with the Massachusetts Curriculum Standards. Lessons and activities in all courses are designed to engage students in the mathematics practice standards: (1) Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them. (2) Reason abstractly and quantitatively (3) Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others. (4) Model with Mathematics (5) Use appropriate tools strategically (6) Attend to precision (7) Look for and make use of structure (8) Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

#### **At R. J. Grey**

##### **7<sup>th</sup> GRADE MATH COURSE**

This is a heterogeneous course that follows the Massachusetts Curriculum Standards for Grade 7 Mathematics.

##### **8<sup>th</sup> GRADE MATH COURSES**

There are two courses of math in 8th grade. Recommendations for courses are determined using a student’s performance on tests and quizzes in conjunction with other key math success indicators such as perseverance and tolerance of productive struggle, rate of learning new material, precision and reasoning, retention, ability to recognize and use connections between concepts, ability to apply concepts to novel situations, and fluidity of math computations.

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade Math:** Follows the Massachusetts Curriculum Standards for Grade 8 Mathematics.  
**Algebra 1:** Largely parallels the Algebra I H course at ABRHS

## **At ABRHS**

Three years of high school math, including Algebra I and Geometry, are required to graduate from ABRHS. Recommendations for 9th grade math classes are determined using the aforementioned math success indicators.

### **9<sup>th</sup> GRADE MATH COURSES**

**For students who completed 8th Grade Math:** Algebra I H, Algebra I, Principles of Alg. I

**For students who completed 8th Grade Algebra 1:** Geometry H, Geometry, Algebra I H, Algebra I

**Elective for any grade 9 students:** Computer Science, Computer Science H

The math curriculum at ABRHS follows closely with the Massachusetts Math Curriculum Frameworks and classes are offered at the Honors (H) and signature level. Each course level offers a different degree of difficulty, spiral review, homework expectations, in-class review for assessments, and expectations for completing unique / non-routine problems.

- For descriptions of specific high school mathematics courses, see the [High School Program of Studies](#)
- For Q&A comparing different math courses, levels & sequences, see the [Transition to Grade 9 Website](#).

There are opportunities for upward-level movement between each school year for students who demonstrate proficiency in concepts and skills in their current class. Being in a particular level for a year does not mean the student will be at the same level the next year. Students may move between levels each year according to their developing skills, interests, and desire for challenge. Additional considerations include a student's growth in: completing homework regularly, performing well on exams without major grade fluctuations, grasping concepts (both concrete and abstract) with a strong depth of understanding during class, the requisite problem-solving ability to apply previously taught concepts to new situations, and perseverance with nonroutine problems.

As you consider your student's course selection for grade 8 and 9, keep in mind that teachers make recommendations on a variety of factors to place students in the class that will best strengthen the individual student's understanding of math. We encourage families to collaborate with their students' grade 7 and grade 8 classroom teachers so we can best develop your student's mathematical understanding, enjoyment of the subject, and self-confidence as a learner.

**COMMON MATH PATHWAYS, GRADES 9-12**

	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Acceleration?
<b>Pathway 1</b>	Geometry H	Algebra II H	Precalculus / Intro to Calc H	BC Calculus AP or AB Calculus AP	This is the most accelerated pathway for students.
	Geometry	Algebra II	Precalculus / Intro to Calc	Calculus	

	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Acceleration?
<b>Pathway 2</b>	Algebra I H	Geometry H	Algebra II H	Precalculus / Intro to Calc H	Geo / Alg II double up  OR Summer Precalc
	Algebra I or Principles of Algebra I	Geometry or Principles of Geometry	Algebra II or Principles of Algebra II	Precalculus / Intro to Calc or Precalculus or Financial Literacy	

**For further information, please contact:**

Ms. Jessica Carabellese, High School Department Leader

[jcarabellese@abschools.org](mailto:jcarabellese@abschools.org)

Ms. Kimberly Macey, Junior High Department Coordinator

[kmacey@abschools.org](mailto:kmacey@abschools.org)

## ENGLISH

### At R. J. Grey

The continuing development of communication skills is the primary focus of the R. J. Grey English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum. The overall learning goals for the students are the following:

- To write for a variety of purposes: to support an idea, to tell a story, to inform or explain.
- To read, comprehend, and analyze a variety of literary texts.
- To read, comprehend, and analyze a variety of informational texts.
- To demonstrate proficiency in English grammar and usage while speaking and writing.
- To demonstrate presentation skills.
- To use collaborative skills for a common purpose.

The specific skills and objectives for each grade align with the Common Core State Standards for Massachusetts. Further information can be found on our district curriculum website:

<https://www.abschools.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=216111&pageId=477516>

Thematic units and genre studies comprise the curriculum content. Each unit consists of a variety of texts and activities that address the curriculum skill standards. Students are actively involved in a range of activities within the communication spectrum, either individually or with groups of varying sizes. The units, from which teachers choose according to their needs and interests, are divided between grades seven and eight. Examples of units include: Conflict, Windows and Mirrors, Common Ground, Historical Perspectives, Self-awareness/Identity, Cultural Perspectives, Justice, War and Peace, and Memoir. Genre studies include: Short Story, Poetry, Biography, Literary Non-fiction, Mystery, and Drama/Shakespeare. Additional units are developed and others refined as new readings, materials, and/or strategies to nurture student learning emerge. To the extent that time allows, teachers work with their other team teachers to weave curriculum concepts together in interdisciplinary units.

Each unit is designed to reflect the interests and needs of the early adolescent. In many units, to provide for individual differences and interests, students have a choice of readings. They are introduced to several novels or texts, varying in storyline and reading difficulty but all on the unit theme. Students will also have independent reading opportunities throughout the year. The choice of thematic units and the literature involved in the unit may vary from team to team and year to year; however, the skill objectives and standards are consistent for all students.

### At ABRHS

Four years of high school English are required to graduate from ABRHS. Over their four years of English, students will develop skill and confidence in these three areas:

- 1) **Critical thinking.** Students learn to react thoughtfully to texts. They inquire, research, analyze and propose and defend arguments about abstract ideas as well as moral and ethical issues emerging from texts of all kinds.
- 2) **Communication.** Students learn to communicate meaningfully in written and spoken discourse. Effective communication skills include mastery of narrative and argumentative structure, sentence construction, tone, and grammar as well as sharing and responding to ideas and perspectives during class discussions.
- 3) **Awareness.** Students develop their awareness of the individual and others on a local and global scale, finding connections, and building empathy with those unlike themselves.

As students prepare to leave R. J. Grey, English teachers will recommend most of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade class for English I. Students ready for more independent learning and challenge in their study of English may be recommended for English 1 Honors. English 1 students read a set of core texts. Beyond these core works, students in English 1 Honors will read additional titles and will be expected to read in greater depth and with a greater degree of independence.

In all 9<sup>th</sup> grade English classes, students are regularly expected to complete a writing assignment, which include narrative or personal writing, and argumentative and analytical writing. Writing instruction is focused on developing students' thinking to support an argument, use of evidence to support an argument, and ability to organize effectively. At the honors level, in addition to reinforcing these skills, teachers expect students to build more complex, nuanced arguments and to attend to matters of style.

**For further information, please contact:**

Ms. Dianne Telicki, High School Department Leader  
[dtelicki@abschools.org](mailto:dtelicki@abschools.org)

Ms. Margaret Horner, Junior High Department Coordinator  
[mhorner@abschools.org](mailto:mhorner@abschools.org)

## HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES

### At R. J. Grey

Social Studies at the junior high consists of a seventh-grade American studies course, entitled *We the People*, and an eighth-grade course, entitled *Beyond the Single Story: Comparative Cultures*. Through a variety of sources, with special emphasis on primary sources, both courses encourage students to think critically, be respectful of differences and varied points of view, draw connections between history and the events of today, and be informed active citizens. Social studies classes at the junior high are heterogeneously grouped.

In Grade 7, students are first introduced to the concept of identity, a theme throughout the school year. They begin to understand the numerous factors that shape their own identities. Through this understanding, students coming to the junior high from many different elementary schools come to recognize similarities, differences, and shared interests with their classmates, providing opportunities for establishing connections and friendships. This understanding allows for a safe and respectful classroom environment that encourages multiple perspectives and points of view. It also helps create a sense of community throughout the school.

From individual identity, students will then begin to gain an understanding of national identity. As they develop map skills, they look at how the face of America has continued to change. Students study the founding documents – the *Declaration of Independence*, *Constitution*, and *Bill of Rights* – as the foundation of the “American Promise” of equality, justice, and liberty. Throughout the rest of the year, students ask themselves to consider to what extent we, as a nation, have lived up to those stated ideals for different people. How has the “We” in our *Constitution’s* “We the People” changed over time? Specific focus is on the historic experiences of women, African Americans, and immigrants in order to help students make connections to important political, social, and economic issues today.

In Grade 7, critical thinking skills are formally introduced and reinforced repeatedly throughout the school year. These skills include summarizing information to draw conclusions, making inferences, and using supporting evidence. Students learn to actively read a variety of primary and secondary sources. Organization and study skills are also emphasized. These skills are reinforced and built upon in Grade 8.

The Grade 8 curriculum reinforces the environment of respect established in Grade 7 and begins the year by exploring our “cultural lens” and the impact it has on one’s view of the world. The essential question – “What is the danger of a single story?” – helps guide the curriculum. Its primary focus on just two cultures, those of Iran and China, allows the many layers of these cultures – geography, literature, belief systems, history, the arts, politics and current events – to be uncovered and more deeply understood. Throughout both units, students consider the themes of power, the legacy of the past, and the influence of ideology.

Critical thinking and student skills introduced in seventh grade are further developed in Grade 8. We also continue to focus on geography and developing map skills as a way for students to be able to better understand the connection between place and society. The content knowledge and skills learned throughout Grade 8 help prepare students to enter Grade 9 and beyond.

### At ABRHS

Many considerations guide level recommendations in social studies courses: strength as a reader and writer, enthusiasm for subject matter and willingness to embrace independent work are key examples. Additionally, students’ willingness to take initiative in the learning process, to add to class discussions, and to seek assistance when needed are important factors.

Students take a three-year social studies core curriculum, which begins with World History and continues with a two-year sequence of U.S. History and Government. This configuration addresses topics and skills in world history not addressed in earlier education. It also allows for an in-depth consideration of the development of the American governmental system and central documents such as the Constitution. Grade nine courses are World History and World History Honors. Overall, the chronologically sequenced units and overarching themes are consistent across levels. Where relevant, the major differences across levels are the amount of reading required, the expectations regarding written work, the level of detail and abstraction that students must handle, and the degree to which teachers scaffold the learning process.

When 8<sup>th</sup> grade staff make level recommendations, they evaluate students' demonstrated abilities in reading and writing. In addition they will consider students' consistency of performance, their ability to organize and synthesize materials and thoughts, their degree of independence, and their level of enthusiasm for the subject matter.

Leveling decisions in social studies are flexible and try to reflect students' interests and needs in a given year. Students may successfully move from a lower-level course to a higher-level course from one year to the next, so long as they possess the reading and writing skills – plus the time and independence – to support a more-detailed and abstract approach to work. In addition, some of the electives offered to older students require different skill sets from the core required courses, which allow students to experiment somewhat with leveling options.

Sophomores, juniors, and seniors may opt to take Genocide and Conflict Resolution (with an honors option), a course that addresses the Holocaust, factors associated with genocide in general, and approaches toward reconciliation. Also available to grades 10-12 is a course called Understanding Race (with an honors option), which explores racial identity, case studies in race and racism, and local issues around race and racism. Students in grades 10-12 may also opt to take You and the Law (with an honors option).

Beginning in junior year, students may select from a wide variety of elective courses offered by the department. Leveled courses include Psychology (AP seniors only, unlevleled for juniors and seniors), European History (AP seniors only), and African American Studies (AP seniors only). Elective courses include the year-long Economics class and semester classes: Political Science (with honors option). Honors electives typically require considerable reading and research and/or integration of concepts. The non-leveled courses involve analytical reading and writing, and they focus more on current events and projects. Consequently, appropriate course selections reflect a combination of individual skills, available time, and enthusiasm.

**For further information, please contact:**

Mr. David Green, High School Department Leader  
[dgreen@abschools.org](mailto:dgreen@abschools.org)

Mr. Anthony Zeese, Junior High Department Coordinator  
[azeese@abschools.org](mailto:azeese@abschools.org)

## SCIENCE

The science curriculum 7–12 encourages students to utilize the process of scientific inquiry to discover and interpret scientific knowledge. The curriculum is designed to support a variety of teaching strategies, including cooperative, peer, and project-based learning; lecture; group discussions; and audio-visual presentations. Throughout all grades and courses, we emphasize the laboratory as a focal point for learning.

### **At R. J. Grey**

In the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, all science classes are heterogeneously grouped. The 7<sup>th</sup>- and 8<sup>th</sup>-grade science curriculum promotes conceptual and skill development, as well as student interaction. A range of topics in physical, biological, earth/space, and environmental science is taught; in addition, the curriculum aims to explore the interrelationships between disciplines. Our junior high science program introduces the students to a myriad of scientific themes and topics, imparts the fundamentals necessary for a successful transition to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and prepares them for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade MCAS exam.

### **At ABRHS**

The graduation requirement for science is three years of science, one of which must be biology. The core courses of Environmental Science, Biology, Chemistry and Physics are aligned with the Massachusetts Science and Technology/Engineering Curriculum Framework [STE] and are defined as lab-science classes. The science curriculum is designed so that students will engage in the process of science through scientific inquiry and application of the underlying scientific concepts. Students will use qualitative as well as computational thinking to analyze and interpret data. They will develop the necessary skills to generate and interpret qualitative and quantitative data, evaluate scientific claims, and provide evidence for scientific conclusions. The sequence of skill development is designed for students to progress from Environmental Science to Biology to Chemistry to Physics.

The 8<sup>th</sup> grade science teachers will recommend students for AP Environmental Science, Honors Environmental Science or Environmental Science. These full year courses meet daily for one period per day and will all have a significant lab component embedded into the class. Students will have the opportunity to take AP Environmental Science in grades 10-12 if students are not recommended for the class in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Students do not need to take AP Environmental Science in 9<sup>th</sup> grade as a prerequisite for taking other AP science classes in future years. Science Research is a grade 9-12, full year, every other day course that is also available for 9<sup>th</sup> grade students who are interested in exploring data collection, analysis, and various modes of expressing that data.

**SCIENCE COURSE OFFERINGS**

The Program of Studies provides details for all of the science course offerings.

	9th grade	10th grade	11th grade	12th grade
<b>Full year classes</b>	AP Environmental Sci H Environmental Sci Environmental Sci	AP Biology H Biology Biology	AP Chemistry H Chemistry Chemistry	AP Physics H Physics Physics
		AP Environmental Science		
			AP Biology AP Chemistry	
<b>Electives</b>	Science Research (Alt)			
			Anatomy & Physiology (Sem)	
			Bioethics (Sem)	
			Marine Biology (Sem)	
			Project Based Engineering (Sem)	

**For further information, please contact:**

Mr. Fred Hohn, High School Department Leader

[fhohn@abschools.org](mailto:fhohn@abschools.org)

Anastasia McVey, Junior High Department Coordinator

[amcvey@abschools.org](mailto:amcvey@abschools.org)

## ROBOTICS

Our new Robotics Program invites students to explore the principles of design and mechanical systems through hands-on and collaborative learning projects. Combined

*Offered to grades 9-12*

**ROBOTICS 1**, is an introductory project-based course in which students will learn how to design, construct, and program robots. In the process, students will learn about mechanical hardware, simple machines, transmission systems, and pneumatic systems.

**ROBOTICS 2** is a project-based course that builds on the skills learned in Robotics 1. Students will choose an engineering design problem that requires an automated solution. Students will create a custom design to solve these problems.

**ENGINEERING DESIGN** introduces students to engineering design principles using a variety of hands-on experiences and projects. Students will engage in project-based learning, explore practical, real-world connections, and have an opportunity to see how science, mathematics, and engineering are part of their everyday world.

## WORLD LANGUAGES

Acton–Boxborough students typically begin their formal language studies at Raymond J. Grey Junior High School, where they elect French or Spanish in grade seven. It is a two-year program, equivalent to Novice French or Novice Spanish at the high school. The curriculum is designed for the middle school student by allowing more time for practice, hands-on activities, games, music, and cultural experiences. The students will learn the rudiments of the language that they have selected, while developing an appropriate proficiency level in the three communicative modes: Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational. Seventh and eighth graders study language as a core subject on their junior high team.

1. By the conclusion of their junior high language studies, students who have demonstrated appropriate proficiency in the three communicative modes (Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational) in grade eight are ready to continue their language study in Intermediate French I or Intermediate Spanish I at Acton-Boxborough Regional High School. Grade eight students transition well into the recommended course since the Intermediate French I and Intermediate Spanish I programs build upon the R.J. Grey Junior High curriculum, and teachers in both buildings work collaboratively to properly sequence language learning from grades seven through twelve.
2. At Acton-Boxborough Regional High School, most students will continue their language of choice from the junior high. They also have the option of beginning the study of another or of “doubling up” by starting an additional language, may it be French, Spanish, Latin, or Chinese. (See #4, below, and *Potential Sequence of World Language Courses*, on page 16.) *Grade eight students who would like to elect two languages for their freshman year* should plan their schedule carefully with their grade eight counselor, since carrying six classes can be demanding.
3. *For students who have regularly not met the proficiency targets in their junior high language studies*, world language teachers will recommend Novice French I or Novice Spanish I or Novice Spanish II at the high school. With the revisiting of some themes and the chance to hone their skills delving into some new themes, students will have the opportunity to strengthen their foundation and be successful at the high school.
4. *Students who have not begun their language studies in junior high* also have options for beginning their studies at ABRHS (see *Potential Sequence of World Language Courses*). In an effort to meet the different needs of our beginning language learners, the department offers several options for studying first-year Chinese, French, Latin or Spanish.

*For students initiating language learning or who want to pick up another language several options are available at the high school level.*

Students who prefer to study a classical language that focuses on reading, grammar, vocabulary and Roman culture, the department offers **Latin**.

**Novice Latin** is an introductory course for the novice language learner. This course has been designed to move at a medium pace as they learn to read and write Latin through a variety of methods and strategies. Focus areas will include grammar, prefixes, suffixes, word roots, Roman history, and Roman culture.

*For students who prefer to study a modern language that focuses on listening and speaking, as well as reading, writing, and culture, students may elect French, Spanish or Chinese.*

**Novice French I**, which is open to all language learners, is an integrated approach to language learning that includes the study of grammar in a meaningful context. Students work on building interpretive, interpersonal and presentational skills. Students will work towards a novice high

proficiency level in this class. Novice French I students will continue to Novice French II that will work towards an Intermediate low level .

**Novice Spanish I**, which is open to all language learners, is an integrated approach to language learning that includes the study of grammar in a meaningful context. Students work on building interpretive, interpersonal and presentational skills. Students will work towards a novice high proficiency level in this class. Novice Spanish I students will continue to Novice Spanish II that will work towards an Intermediate low level .

**Novice Chinese I** is an integrated approach to language learning that includes the study of grammar. It is an introduction to spoken Chinese, using the Pinyin system of Roman letters. Students learn to converse simply and are introduced to the writing of Chinese in simplified characters. Students will begin to develop an appreciation of Chinese culture that will better prepare them to interact in a global society.

**Intermediate I Spanish or French**, is open to language learners who have completed the 7th and 8th grade Novice learning sequence. It is an integrated approach to language learning that includes the study of grammar in a meaningful context. Students work on building interpretive, interpersonal and presentational skills. Students will continue to build upon previous skill work now at the intermediate skill level. Students will work towards an intermediate mid level of skill development.

To determine which language offering best meets the needs of a student initiating new language study at the high school, a junior high student should meet with the Junior High World Language Department Coordinator in the spring of grade 8 for a course recommendation.

Once at the high school, students will progress through language courses as indicated in the *Potential Sequence of World Language Courses* chart. World language teachers will recommend an appropriate course and level for their students. World language students are not “tracked”; there are many instances of students who move to a higher or lower ability-level grouping throughout their sequence of language studies. Students from the junior high school language program will enter into a single entry course in each language to prepare all students for the proficiency based high school curriculum. After the first year students will be recommended for levels.

A frequently asked question is: “How many years of language study are required for graduation from ABRHS?” The answer is two years. Many colleges have entrance requirements in world languages. For example, the Massachusetts Board of Regents of Higher Education has established a minimum requirement in languages for admission to the four-year state colleges and universities: two years of one foreign language. Very competitive schools look for students who have studied one language in depth – i.e., for four or five years. Students are advised to consult particular colleges of interest for their specific admission and placement requirements in order to keep their options open.

All ABRHS world language students will have opportunities to participate in Exchange Programs, Community Service activities, and study/travel abroad when offered. In addition, ABRHS offers students some opportunities that they may not have had before. For instance, students may access the digital multimedia language laboratory.

In recognition of achievement in language studies, the high school supports local chapters of the National French, Latin, Spanish, and Chinese Honor Societies. Recipients of our outstanding course achievement awards in each level are recognized at the end of the school year. The district also awards the Seal of Biliteracy, an award given by a school or district in recognition of students who have studied and attained proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in two or more languages by high school graduation. A bill to establish a state seal of biliteracy was signed by Governor Baker in



- c) Facility with learning and using new grammar and verbs
- d) Self-discipline and motivation towards second language expression
- e) The school district's program is, of course, only the beginning. The long-term goal of our grade seven through twelve program is that our students use and enjoy their world languages beyond the confines of the Acton-Boxborough School District and continue to build a strong proficiency in the language. Our intent is to offer them an excellent start toward this end.

**For further information, please contact:**

Ms. Cathy Foster, High School Department Leader

[cfoster@abschools.org](mailto:cfoster@abschools.org)

Mr. Matt Wirzburger, Junior High Department Coordinator

[mwirzburger@abschools.org](mailto:mwirzburger@abschools.org)

**The Following Disciplines Are Not Leveled, but Many Courses Have Prerequisites**

**PERFORMING ARTS DEPARTMENT**

Courses in the Performing Arts Department are not leveled. A wide range of students will be involved in these courses; for example, our band and orchestra will have musicians from developing to highly advanced. The ensemble director can assign parts that will suit all students' needs and abilities. Students playing in the band or orchestra for the first time must contact their ensemble director to learn about opportunities for individual study. Band and orchestra are large ensemble class rehearsals with limited individual instruction.

**At R. J. Grey**

The following junior high school courses have no prerequisites:

- Grade 7 Chorus
- Grade 8 Chorus
- Grade 7 Music – Exploratory
- Grade 8 Drama – Exploratory
- Grade 7 Orchestra
- Grade 8 Orchestra
- Grade 7 Band
- Grade 8 Band

The following junior high school programs have some entry requirements.

- √ Dramatic productions are offered as an after-school activity. Open auditions are held for all interested students.
- √ Jazz Band is offered as an after-school activity. Woodwind/Brass/Percussion players must be enrolled in band/chorus/or orchestra. Piano/Bass/Guitar will be selected by audition.

- √ Select Choir is offered as an after-school activity. Students must be members of the chorus/band/or orchestra program to participate.

**At ABRHS**

The following high school Performing Arts courses have no prerequisites or requirements:

- Acting I
- Band
- Color Guard
- Chamber Choir (unauditioned, grades 9-12)
- Drama: Comedy Improv
- Electronic Music I
- Introduction to Technical Theater
- Music Theory
- Piano I
- Popular Music Workshop
- Public Speaking

The following high school courses have some kind of prerequisite or requirement:

- √ Orchestra (prior experience playing string instrument)
- √ Jazz Band (by audition only) Woodwind/Brass/Percussion players must be in the band.  
Piano/Bass/Guitar by audition
- √ Bella Voce (treble voices, grades 9-12 by audition only)
- √ Madrigal Singers (grades 9-12 by audition only)
- √ Advanced Theater Production (by teacher recommendation)
- √ Advanced Improv Performance (by teacher recommendation)
- √ Acting II (Acting I) (offered every other year)

**For further information, please contact:**

Mr. George Arsenault, Director of Visual and Performing Arts, K-12

[garsenault@abschools.org](mailto:garsenault@abschools.org)

## VISUAL ARTS DEPARTMENT

### PHILOSOPHY

The Visual Arts program provides a meaningful pathway for all students to acquire and nurture students' development as visual learners and creative thinkers. Using the lens of Lois Hetland's Studio Habits of Mind, a strong foundation of skills enables students the abilities to develop their craft, take risks, problem solve, persevere, envision, observe, reflect, and collaborate. Building on these skills, students are encouraged and supported to explore and develop their own creative vision.

### AT R. J. GREY

All grade 7 and grade 8 students take an Art Exploratory each year: Art 1 in grade 7, Art 2 in grade 8. The units of study in these courses explore a wide variety of art mediums such as drawing, painting, hand building with clay plus many more diverse art experiences. In addition, 7th and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students may choose from a selection of quarter-long visual art electives. The junior high program provides a broad experience so that students may make informed choices when they get to high school.

### R. J. GREY VISUAL ARTS COURSES

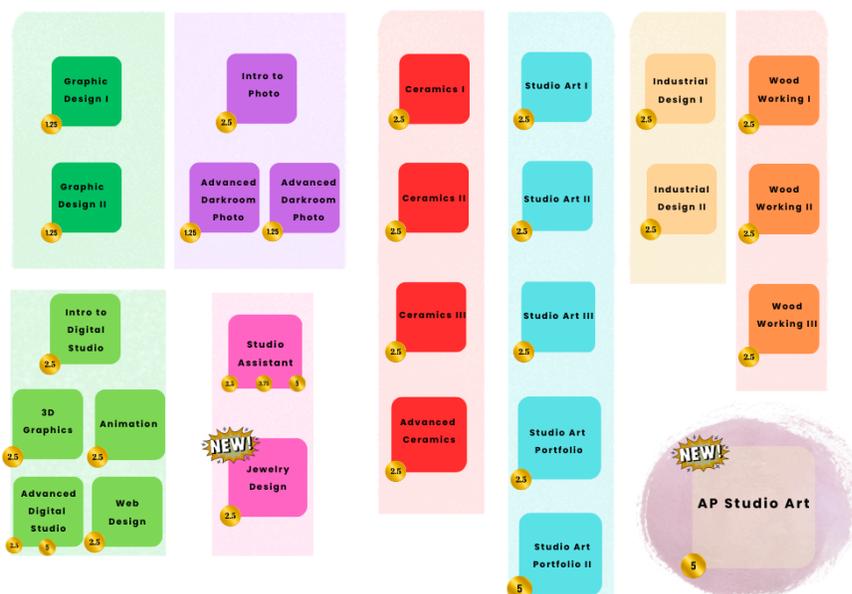
- Art 1 Exploratory: Grade 7 – every other day, ½ year (*meets for 45 class periods*)
- Art 2 Exploratory: Grade 8 – every other day, ½ year (*meets for 45 class periods*)
- Art Elective: Grades 7 and 8 – every other day, ¼ year (*meets for 20-22 class periods*)

### At ABRHS

The Acton-Boxborough Regional High School Visual Arts program offers 26 courses that span a wide variety of traditional and digital media, two- and three-dimensional art forms, and industrial arts, as well as interdisciplinary approaches.

### ABRHS VISUAL ARTS COURSES

#### AB VISUAL ARTS PATHWAYS 2026-2027



### Ceramics

- Ceramics I
- Ceramics II (*prerequisite: Ceramics I*)

- Ceramics III (*prerequisite: Ceramics II*)
- Advanced Ceramics (*prerequisite: Ceramics III*)

### **Digital Art**

- Intro to Digital Studio
- Web Page Design (*prerequisite: Intro to Digital Studio*)
- Animation (*prerequisite: Intro to Digital Studio*)
- 3D Graphics Modeling, Animation & Games (*prerequisite Intro to Digital Studio*)
- Graphic Design
- Graphic Design II (*prerequisite: Graphic Design I*)
- Advanced Digital Arts (*prerequisite: Graphic Design II, Web Design, Animation, 3D Graphics*)

### **Industrial Arts**

- Woodworking I
- Woodworking II (*prerequisite: Woodworking I*)
- Woodworking III (*prerequisite: Woodworking II*)
- Industrial Design & Fabrication I
- Industrial Design & Fabrication II (*prerequisite: Industrial Design & Fabrication I*)

### **Photography**

- Introduction to Photography
- Advanced Darkroom Photography (*prerequisite: Introduction to Photography*)
- Advanced Digital Photography (*prerequisite: Introduction to Photography*)

### **Studio Art**

- Studio Art I
- Studio Art II (*prerequisite: Studio Art I*)
- Studio Art III (*prerequisite: Studio Art II*)
- Studio Art Portfolio (*prerequisite: Studio Art III*)
- Studio Art & Portfolio II (*prerequisite: Studio Art III, Studio Art Portfolio, or a portfolio review*)

### **Other Visual Arts Courses**

- AP Art & Design (available for Juniors and Seniors with VA faculty recommendation)
- Studio Assistant (available for Juniors & Seniors with VA faculty recommendation)
- Jewelry Design (available for 10-12 grade students)
- Piano II (Grades 10-12 with VA recommendation)

### **For further information, please contact:**

Mr. George Arsenault, Director of Visual and Performing Arts, K–12  
[garsenault@abschools.org](mailto:garsenault@abschools.org)

## HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Our vision in the Acton-Boxborough schools is that all students will understand, appreciate, and engage in a healthy and active lifestyle.

Our mission is to provide a progressive and comprehensive Health and Physical Education program through high-quality, research-based instruction. Students will develop skills and knowledge through a wide variety of learning experiences in a safe environment. Students will also learn how and why they should keep themselves healthy and physically active throughout their lifetimes. Instruction will emphasize physical fitness and skill application, critical thinking and decision-making, sportsmanship, and cooperation.

### At R. J. Grey

All 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students are required to take health and physical education. Students attend as a team that is divided into a rotation over the course of the year.

### At ABRHS

#### GRADE 9

All grade 9 students follow the Fitness for Living course, which consists of:

- One quarter in the fitness center
- One quarter lower gym, fitness circuits, cooperative games, and other group games
- One quarter of health topics
- One quarter swimming and outside cooperative group games and activities.

#### GRADES 10, 11, AND 12

- All grade 10, 11, and 12 students are required to take one semester, i.e. two quarters, of physical education – the equivalent of half a year.

#### COURSE CHOICES

- ~ Competitive Sports and Games: Students will participate in a variety of sports and team games such as handball, tennis, ultimate frisbee, soccer, disc golf, tennis, pickleball, volleyball, floor hockey, soccer, table tennis, badminton.
- ~ Lifetime Fitness and Games: Students will participate in cooperative group activities, fitness center, group exercise, dancing, outdoor walking/running, biking and archery, badminton and table tennis.
- ~ Health/Physical Education combination: This class is a mix of physical activities and games, fitness center and health lessons.
- ~ Lifeguard training/certification/water skills for life. - Students will learn and practice life saving and water instruction skills in the pool and then take the Red Cross Certification for Lifeguarding and or Water Safety Instruction - [Students who are not interested in the certification may still take the course]
- ~ Wellness and Yoga: This class is a mix of group exercises with yoga elements and can use the fitness center.

\*\*\* Some of the electives are offered on an every other year basis.

**For further information, please contact:**

Parindar Miller, PE and Health Liaison, 9-12

[pmiller@abschools.org](mailto:pmiller@abschools.org)

Beth Viscardi, PE and Health Liaison, 7-8

[bviscardi@abschools.org](mailto:bviscardi@abschools.org)



## **Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools**

### **NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION**

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions, 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. 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.

Any person having inquiries or complaints concerning the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District's compliance with Title VI, Title IX, Section 504, ADA or MGL ch. 76, sec.5 is directed to contact the Director for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Administration Building, 15 Charter Road, Acton, MA, telephone number 978-264-4700, x11210, who has been designated by the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District to coordinate the District's efforts to comply with these laws, or write to:

Office for Civil Rights

J. F. Kennedy Federal Building, Room 1875

Boston, MA 02203

or

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Office of Program Quality Assurance Services

135 Santilli Hwy, Everett, MA 02149