

Kindergarten Enrollment  
2011-2012

Read columns from top to bottom to view class sizes for this kindergarten as it moves through 6th grade

| <b>March 2011 Actual Registrations</b> |          |                               |       |            |      |      |
|--|----------|-------------------------------|-------|------------|------|------|
|  | Enrolled | Yr to Yr<br>Progression Ratio | Staff | Total      | 15   | 16   |
| K                                      | 261      |                               | 6     |            |      |      |
| Add 15*                                | 276      |                               | 6     | <b>282</b> | 18.8 | 17.6 |
| 1st                                    | 295      | 1.07                          | 6     | 301        | 20.1 | 18.8 |
| 2nd                                    | 311      | 1.06                          | 6     | 317        | 21.2 | 19.8 |
| 3rd                                    | 322      | 1.03                          | 6     | 328        | 21.9 | 20.5 |
| 4th                                    | 329      | 1.02                          | 6     | 335        | 22.3 | 20.9 |
| 5th                                    | 334      | 1.02                          | 6     | 340        | 22.7 | 21.3 |
| 6th                                    | 340      | 1.02                          | 6     | 346        | 23.1 | 21.6 |

\*We need to plan for 15-20 new kindergarteners to register between now and the start of school.

Year to Year progression ratio comes from Ashton's projections for the 2011 kindergarten class

*7.2.  
(brought to meeting)*

To the APS School Committee and the Acton Financial Committee:

We are writing to express our concern over the proposed APS budget for FY 2012 and the continued lack of funding in that budget for full-time assistants in every classroom.

The current system of having the PTSOs fund assistant hours, i.e. basic educational services, is inconsistent with the whole concept of public education. The PTSOs have been put in this position due to what feels like the constant cutting of school services in the budgets developed by the School Committee. Over the years the School Committee has consistently and continually refused to address this problem. Now, with money left in the budget due to Dr. Mills' careful and thoughtful budgeting, it is inconceivable to us that that money would go anywhere but directly to the schools to address outstanding needs, including adding assistant hours to each elementary school.

While the budget discussions always seem to result in a decision to "give money back to the taxpayers," we would like to point out that almost 2,000 tax-paying households in Acton are paying an additional tax of, on average, \$200 each to their respective PTSOs in order to support basic educational needs at the elementary school level. This amount far exceeds any "rebate" contemplated by the Financial Committee in its various schemes to "return money to the taxpayer." Perhaps instead of giving in to the Financial Committee, the School Committee should consider alleviating the size of this extra tax paid by elementary school parents in town.

The burden of this extra tax is felt by all the parents who are tired of the lack of School Committee support and have decided to take matters into our own hands. We at McCarthy-Towne – and the other elementary schools – are funding classroom assistants because we have no choice. The "disgusting inequities" referred to by a School Committee member are the result of the PTSOs having had to make difficult choices. We cannot continue to ask teachers to do more with less, and we at McCarthy-Towne will not allow that to happen as long as we are able. We have put our children first and we will decide how our funds are allocated. We would be delighted if the School Committee would support and vote in budgets that would allow us to put our funds to other uses, such as additional CPAC assemblies and other enrichment opportunities. Given Dr. Mills' success in managing our budgets, it would appear that we now have the ability to address some of these issues, and we hope that the School Committee will stand up and advocate for our schools and our children and use that money accordingly.

Sincerely,

Tammy Sarnelli and Michele Caterina  
On behalf of the McCarthy-Towne PTSO

8.6.6.

From: Alex Horovitz <[redacted]> Wed, Mar 16, 2011 10:02:42 ... [redacted]

Subject: The time has come to end homework in Acton's K-8 classrooms

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Attachments: Attach0.html

13K

Dear Acton Public School Principals, Craig Hardimon, Dr. Alixe Callen, and School Committee Members,

To begin with, as it is not said often enough, thank you for your excellent work with our school age children.

I am writing to you today to encourage an act of courage and leadership on your part to continue this proud tradition of excellence. If you act together, and stand firm with good science at your back as opposed to wishful thinking of some segments of our community, you can change the lives of our children for the better. This change will be positive both academically and from a wellness point of view.

I am asking that you take the bold step of eliminating homework from the grade schools and middle school and fundamentally change the way homework is created and assigned at the high school.

When you take a good objective look at the value of homework, you will walk away largely stunned by what you discover. You will find absolutely no evidence of any academic benefit from assigning homework at the elementary grade levels. You will find no correlation between even doing homework, let alone how much, and any meaningful measure of achievement. This is true at the middle school level as well. Even at the high school level, the correlation is weak at best, and when the application of more rigorous statistical measures is applied it all but disappears.

Even if we allow that there might be some value ( scientifically speaking ) of homework for students in grades 9-12, then we must acknowledge that there are ways to design homework assignments that maximize that theoretical value. For starters, I think we should only ask students to take on homework assignments that teachers are willing to create themselves as opposed to prefabricated worksheets or generic exercises photocopied from textbooks. Where this is already happening, I think those teachers deserve our recognition and appreciation. However, I think the research tends to show that

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teacher created homework assignments is not enough.

If we want to say that the value of homework is to provide additional reinforcement through at home stimulation of the key concepts, then we must certainly acknowledge that a one size fits all approach cannot possibly work. There is no perfect assignment that will capture the range of capabilities and interests of any classroom of children ( even those that have been tracked together ). As such, I would ask that on those days when homework is viewed as absolutely necessary, the teachers should create several assignments that reflect the range of their classroom. This is more work, but the result should be that if it is important enough to be done at home, then it is important enough to do the work of creating well designed assignments.

Therefore, I would ask the respective School Committees design and set a policy for the Districts along the following lines: There will be no homework given to students in grades K-8 and that all homework given to grades 9-12 be designed by the teachers and be individualized to the various levels of capability present in the classroom.

I would also ask that you read this letter into the minutes of the respective School Committee meetings and that an agenda item be created for future discussion and presentation of information on this topic.

I would additionally ask that school Principals take action along these lines on their own and help pave the way for increased wellness and decreased stress on the part of our community's children.

Again, thank you for your continued excellent work with our school age children.

Best Regards,

**Alex**

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Alex Horovitz

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Footnotes: In our community, there will be those who claim homework is beneficial. Others simply take the existence or value of homework for granted and merely offer suggestions for how it ought to be assigned, or what techniques parents should use to make children complete it. I would encourage you to collectively take a leadership role in dispelling these myths. In that regard, I offer up the following resources that provide a foundation to question the conventional assumptions about the value of homework. At the end of the day, as our educational professionals, we rely on you to implement the best practices of learning with our children sometimes in spite of our own views on a given topic.

Barber, Bill. "Homework Does Not Belong on the Agenda for Educational Reform." Educational Leadership, May 1986: 55-57.

Bennett, Sara, and Nancy Kalish. The Case Against Homework: How Homework Is Hurting Our Children and What We Can Do About It (New York: Crown, 2006).

Buell, John. Closing the Book on Homework: Enhancing Public Education and Freeing Family Time. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004).

Dudley-Marling, Curt. "How School Troubles Come Home: The Impact of Homework on Families of Struggling Learners." Current Issues in Education [On-line] 6, 4 (2003).

Hinchey, Patricia. "Rethinking Homework." MASCD [Missouri Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development] Fall Journal, December 1995: 13-17.


Kohn, Alfie. *The Homework Myth: Why Our Kids Get Too Much of a Bad Thing* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2006).

Kralovec, Etta, and John Buell. *The End of Homework: How Homework Disrupts Families, Overburdens Children, and Limits Learning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).

Samway, Katharine. "And You Run and You Run to Catch Up with the Sun, But It's Sinking." *Language Arts* 63 (1986): 352-57.

Vatterott, Cathy. "There's Something Wrong With Homework." *Principal*, January-February 2003: 64.

Waldman, Ayelet. "Homework Hell." [Salon.com](http://Salon.com). October 22, 2005.

From: [REDACTED] "Jesse Liberty (WINDOWS PHONE)" <Jesse.Liberty@microsoft.com> 3/16/... 

Subject: RE: The time has come to end homework in Acton's K-8 classrooms

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Bravo.

I was chagrined that the very first comment from the Superintendent seemed to boil down to a defense of homework as necessary practice (and isn't it self-evident that practice makes perfect?) and an outright dismissal of the idea of eliminating homework in the lower grades. I walked away feeling that we were going to wring our hands, but change nothing of substance. Your letter is a clarion call to taking meaningful steps to improve the lives of our children.

No one would suggest that eliminating homework will "fix" the educational problems of our local schools, let alone of the nation's. There are many interlocking and complex issues that, if they were easy, would have been solved long ago. But challenging the conventional wisdom on homework is a good starting place. Along with that, I would hope the school committee would have the courage to begin to examine the number of tests at every grade level, and the way in which tests are evaluated. I was told by the chair of one department in the high school that "teachers do not have time to look at the work that went into an answer, they can only mark the answer right or wrong." That I found a stunning indictment of class size and teacher workload.

I ran for and won my seat on the School Committee on the slogan of "fully funded schools." There was, and there remains a quiet majority who believe in fully-funded schools, even at the cost of higher taxes. But they want to know that the funding serves a meaningful educational purpose. What could be more meaningful than moving our educational philosophy into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in which our children are treated as whole and complete people, who have the time to explore and play and sleep, and who cannot be measured accurately with #2 pencils?

Thank you,

Jesse Liberty

Former member Acton and Acton Boxborough School Committees

Parent of a Freshman at ABRHS