

# C.T. DOUGLAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM



**October 15, 2018**

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## Introduction

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee is pleased to present the educational plan for the C. T. Douglas Elementary School project. The educational plan is the culmination of four years of Master Planning which included a full review of facilities, evaluation of best options, and the development of a Long Range Strategic Plan. In December 2016, The district adopted a Long Range Strategic Plan with an updated Mission, Vision, and Values that focus on wellness, equity, and engagement. Partnering with the MSBA on a new elementary school provides an opportunity to develop learning spaces that highlight collaboration, creativity, and curiosity for students. This partnership will also allow us to provide more equitable learning opportunities and increase engagement for all students.

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School District (ABRSD) has a unique elementary school “open enrollment” policy. While the district curriculum standards are based on the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education frameworks, each school has the ability to determine its own school philosophy to meet these standards. Families are able to select the elementary school with a philosophy that best fits their family.

The School Committee policy related to open enrollment states, “The Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee strives to provide high standards of educational excellence in all its elementary schools. Since no single teaching method is best for all students, the Committee supports the use of a variety of teaching methods and techniques that will achieve the prescribed curriculum objectives. It follows that parents should have the opportunity to choose the school they think best fits the needs of their children subject to the availability of space and staff.” The district's visioning process for this building project confirmed that teachers are utilizing varied teaching approaches to meet the unique needs of each individual student. As a result, it is important for the new school building to provide equitable opportunities across the facility for all students while designing the spaces within the building to be used flexibly and adapt over time to a variety of teaching strategies and methods.

## ABRSD District Master Planning Process

The District master planning process included the phases described below between 2016-2018.

### A. Phase I Capital Improvement Plan

The Master Planning process began in 2016 with a complete review of the district’s eight school buildings, resulting in a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) listing all updates required over the next ten years. The district’s three oldest elementary schools, Douglas, Gates, and Conant, were determined to be the most in need of renovation. These three schools were built 50+ years ago, and have not had any significant renovation. The district’s Preschool program, currently housed in a former elementary school which was built in 1959, was also determined to be in significant need of relocation.

## B. Phase II of the Master Plan

Phase II included a full Educational Visioning process in the fall of 2016. These three day-long visioning sessions involved 80 stakeholders, including faculty, parents, and community members. There were several focus groups including Principals' workshops to outline educational priorities for any future facilities. At the end of this extensive master planning process, seven possible options were developed to comprehensively meet the needs of all district facilities.

## C. Community Outreach

After receiving the District Master Plan, the School Committee appointed a District Master Plan Review Committee to review the Master Plan and to organize significant community outreach for feedback about the seven options with a goal of narrowing down the options. Twelve public forums were held to gather feedback. The presentation was also made available to the community through the local cable television channel. A survey was distributed to gather feedback about grade configuration and to narrow down the options. A summary report and presentation was given to the School Committee. Documents from each of these phases are posted on [www.abschools.org](http://www.abschools.org) and can be considered attachments to this document.

## D. Preferred Solution and Design Enrollment

After holding twelve community forums and collecting extensive survey feedback, the community supported a preferred solution which would include **a "twin" elementary school to serve two of the district's current older elementary schools as well as the district's preschool program.** The two building site options being considered during the feasibility phase are:

- *Existing Gates/Douglas Site:* a twin school on the current Gates or Douglas property that would include the Douglas and Gates schools, as well as the Carol Huebner Early Childhood Program
- *Existing Conant Site:* a twin school on the current Conant property that would include the Douglas and Conant schools, as well as the Carol Huebner Early Childhood Program

The MSBA has agreed to design enrollment numbers of 650 students if the facility was a single school for Douglas only; 990 students for a twin Douglas/Gates School; and 1015 students for a twin Douglas/Conant School. The Early Childhood Program section of the school would be built for up to 130 preschool students in addition to the elementary design enrollment numbers.

## E. Long Range Strategic Plan

In December 2016, the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee voted to adopt an updated long range strategic plan, which updated the district's mission, vision, and values along with three primary goals related to Wellness, Equity, and Engagement. The educational plan for a new elementary school facility is rooted in the district's newly updated mission, vision, and values.

## F. Additional Visioning Process

In the fall of 2018, the district conducted a second round of visioning workshops as part of its Feasibility Study. Based on the 2016 Master Planning Process preferred vision for a building housing

two elementary schools and the district's preschool, these more recent visioning sessions allowed each school to review and renew the school's individual identity and philosophy and how teaching and learning will change over time in a new facility. Consistent with the agreed-upon scope of the feasibility study, the district included a broad range of stakeholders from C.T. Douglas Elementary School, Paul P. Gates Elementary School, Luther Conant Elementary School, and the Carol Huebner Early Childhood Program. Stakeholders included students, families, faculty, and administrators as well as district administration, school committee, school building committee, and community representatives.

## **Project Goals**

As a result of the extensive master planning and visioning processes, ABRSD has outlined the following goals and priorities for a new elementary school facility:

- A school that highlights student engagement through innovative, collaborative, and flexible learning spaces.
- A new school with two unique elementary schools and room for a preschool will allow each school to maintain an individual identity while benefiting from the economies of a shared facility.
- A library media center which is the hub of the school and is open and inviting for student learning and innovation.
- Small group instructional spaces to provide equitable learning experiences for the increasing population of high needs students. This includes spaces for occupational and physical therapy, speech and language, English language education, and special education programming.
- The district has received national recognition for sustainability and would like to see sustainability as an overarching goal of the new school building project. We believe the building should source green, low VOC materials and provide abundant daylight to support health and wellness, and student learning. We plan to deploy the building as an engaging educational tool for our students to promote social responsibility, and we hope to provide multiple outdoor connections, gathering places and classrooms. We want the school building to be highly energy efficient with renewable energy generation on site (with a goal of net zero), as well as practical and cost effective to operate.
- For the first time, the ABRSD preschool will be able to move into an accessible, warm and inviting space for young children. A new facility will enable preschool students to have a much better social-emotional and whole-child instructional program if it shares a facility with elementary schools. Approximately half of the preschool children are students with Individualized Educational Plans. If the preschool shares a facility with elementary school(s), preschoolers will be able to participate in art, music, physical education, student groupings with other grades, staff collaborative time, etc.
- ABRSD's open enrollment policy works best when each school can support an equal number of classroom sections. Each family of incoming kindergarteners selects the school that they want their child to attend. Final kindergarten assignments are determined through a lottery process. If each school has three kindergarten classrooms, the choices balance out much better than if one school has two kindergarten classrooms and another school has four kindergarten classrooms. A new building with a balanced number of classrooms will improve the equitability of the open enrollment and lottery processes significantly.

## ABRSD District Vision, Mission, and Core Values

### Vision Statement

The **vision** of the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District is to provide high-quality educational opportunities that inspire a community of learners.

### Mission Statement

The **mission** is to develop engaged, well-balanced learners through collaborative, caring relationships.

### Core Value Statements

- **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

Each of the District's schools operates with the District Vision, Mission, and Core Values Statements at the center of all educational decisions and practices. These tenets remained at the forefront of development for this educational plan. The District is hopeful that this building project will provide the appropriate and innovative design features that will support us to move forward with 21st-century teaching and learning practices.

## Grade and School Configuration Policies

As of October 1, 2018 ABRSD serves 5,654 students in preschool through grade 12. 85% of students live in Acton and 15% live in Boxborough. Acton-Boxborough Regional High School (ABRHS) has 1,837 students enrolled in grades 9-12, R. J. Grey Jr. High School (RJGJHS) has 923 students enrolled in grades 7 and 8, and the six K-6 elementary schools have 2,706 students enrolled. There are 105 students enrolled in the early childhood program and there are 83 students in out of district placements.

Since ABRSD has open enrollment instead of neighborhood schools, most of the schools are located on campuses with multiple schools rather than spread out across the two towns. The main school campus, includes the Acton-Boxborough Regional High School, the R. J. Grey Jr. High School, the ABRSD Administration Building (which houses the Carol Huebner Early Childhood Program, Central Office, and the ABRSD Community Education Offices), and the Parker Damon Building, which houses the McCarthy-Towne and Merriam elementary schools. This original "twin school" was built in 2004 and provides a great deal of experience for the district to use in planning a new twin school. Gates and Douglas are located about a half mile west of the main campus on a shared West Acton school campus.

Luther Conant Elementary is located approximately one mile east of the main campus across Route 2, and Blanchard Memorial School is located three miles west of the main school campus in Boxborough.

ABRSD's open enrollment policy provides parents the opportunity to choose the elementary school where their child attends. If there are more requests for a school than space available, there is a lottery. Priority is given to families who meet any of the following criteria:

1. Sibling priority - students whose older brother(s) or sister(s) attend the school
2. Walkers - students within a one-mile safe walk to school
3. Special education - students with IEPs for specialized programs located in a specific school
4. Hometown guarantee - students have a priority to attend a school in their hometown

The open enrollment policy allows students from anywhere in either town to enroll in any of the six elementary schools. However, students in both towns have a hometown guarantee, where elementary students who live in Boxborough are guaranteed a spot at Blanchard Memorial School if they choose, and children who live in Acton are guaranteed a spot at an Acton elementary school if they choose. Exceptions to this may be made for special education reasons or for other reasons as determined by the Superintendent.

Once a student is enrolled in an elementary school, his/her younger siblings will have a priority to attend that elementary school. While the district attempts to place children in the first choice school, this is not always possible. When families enroll in Kindergarten, students who have priority to a specific school are placed first. The remaining students are placed in schools that have enough seats. Any school that is over-subscribed will have a lottery. All students who have chosen a particular school as their first choice will go into the lottery for that school, and students who are not placed in that school are placed on a waitlist. Once all first choices have been placed, students who have not been placed are placed in their second choice school if there is space. If there is no space in their second choice school, they are placed in their third choice school, and so on. There are generally 15-25 students who are not placed in their first choice school in each entering kindergarten class of 300-330.

Each summer, after schools are aware of students who are moving out of Acton or Boxborough, students on waitlists are offered the opportunity to move to their first choice school if there is space available. Once students on waitlists have been placed, new students are placed based on their choices in schools with available seats. Students who move in after kindergarten or during the school year may not be able to be placed in their top choice schools because some schools and classrooms will already be full.

The open enrollment system allows the district to balance class sizes across the district. Rather than limit the placement of students to their neighborhood school, the District is able to place students across the district in any classrooms that have space. The addition of classrooms in a new building will allow all six schools to be more balanced with more appropriate spaces. The overcrowding the district has experienced has impacted all six elementary schools. There are no available classrooms in any school,

reducing available space for special education classrooms and space for specialized instruction. Even though a new school will house two of the district's six elementary schools, the additional square footage will allow all six schools to improve learning spaces.

Currently, Douglas and Gates have two classrooms at several grade levels instead of three. When this happens, one of the other schools has had to put four classrooms at some grade levels even though they were only built for three classrooms at each grade. This has made all of the schools overcrowded. A new school would allow there to be three classrooms in each grade at all six schools. It will also allow students to be placed equitably during the lottery, which will result in shorter waitlists than when there are only two kindergartens at one school and four at another.

## Enrollment: October 1, 2018

School	Grade Configuration	10/1/2018 Enrollment
Blanchard Memorial Elementary	K-6	464
Conant Elementary	K-6	449
Douglas Elementary	K-6	405
Gates Elementary	K-6	376
McCarthy-Towne Elementary	K-6	520
Merriam Elementary	K-6	492
Total Elementary (6 schools)	K-6	2,706
Acton-Boxborough Regional High School	9-12	1,837
R. J. Grey Jr. High School	7-8	923
Carol Huebner Early Childhood Program	Preschool	105
Other (Out of District)	PreK-12	83
Total	PreK-12	5,654

## Class Size Guidelines

The School Committee has a commitment to provide the highest quality education for the students in the District. The Committee recognizes that desirable class sizes are a necessary part of the growth and development of individual students. Therefore, the Committee recommends that elementary class sizes



are kept within the following ranges. Attainment within these class sizes shall, however, be dependent on space and budget considerations.

<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Class Size Range</b>
Kindergarten	18-20
Grades 1-3	20-22
Grades 4-6	22-24

Through the annual enrollment processes, students are placed in schools with an attempt to balance class sizes across the district.

### **Kindergarten**

The ABRSD kindergarten teachers employ a play-based approach to learning. Play is an integral part of the social curriculum, providing students with opportunities to take turns, share materials, and solve social conflicts with peers. Teachers guide students through conflict resolution using a question-based approach, empowering students to solve problems independently. Teachers help students develop an understanding that the learning process is valued as much as the final products created. Establishing and maintaining a strong classroom community where each member feels valued and safe is an essential part of the Kindergarten curriculum. Current sections are:

	<b>Conant</b>	<b>Douglas</b>	<b>Gates</b>
<b>Half-Day Sections</b>	1	1	1
<b>Full-day Sections</b>	2	1	1

### **School Scheduling Methods**

The Gates, Conant and Douglas Schools host students in kindergarten through grade 6. Doors are open to students at 8:30 am and the instructional school day begins at 8:50 am. Students are dismissed at 3:20 pm. Students receive instruction in ELA (Literacy), mathematics, science (STE), and social studies from their classroom teacher in their assigned classroom. At grade six, teachers may specialize for one of the disciplines or each may instruct in one unit of a discipline. Students rotate throughout the day.

The District has a systematic approach for implementing reading interventions and supports for students with academic needs. The schools begin each day with a twenty-minute period dedicated to Morning Meeting based on *Responsive Classroom* principles and practices as a means of addressing social and emotional learning. Each general education class has each special discipline - visual art, performing art

(music), P.E. and health, and library/media - at least once per week, and sometimes for additional periods on a rotating basis, so each space is used 25-30 times or more per week. These disciplines are scheduled, to the extent possible, so that educators on a grade level team have a common collaborative time once a week. This also allows time for school leadership to meet with individual grade levels. Students in grades 5 and 6 also participate in a weekly ensemble (strings, band or chorus).

Instructional time allotments across the three schools are as follows:

#### Classroom-based instructional disciplines:

	<b>Kindergarten (Half - Full Day)</b>	<b>Grade 1-2</b>	<b>Grades 3-6</b>
<b>ELA (Literacy)</b>	30-60 min/day	90 min/day	90-120 min/day
<b>Mathematics</b>	30-60 min/day	60 min/day	60 min/day
<b>Science, Technology and Engineering (STE)</b>	Investigative, center based	30 min/day 3 times/week	45 min/day 3 times/week
<b>Social Studies</b>	30 min/day 2-3 times/week	30 min/day 3 times/week	45 min/day 3 times/week

#### Specialized disciplines:

	<b>Kindergarten (Half - Full Day)</b>	<b>Grade 1-6</b>
<b>Visual Arts</b>	30-45 min/week	45 min/week
<b>Performing Arts (Music)</b>	30-45 min/week	45 min/week
<b>P.E. and Health</b>	30-45 min/week	45 min/week
<b>Library/Media</b>	30-45 min/week	45 min/week

#### Future School Scheduling Methods

Building principals are critical in their role to create building schedules that prioritize the needs of diverse learners, provide uninterrupted instructional time, and allow educators time to regularly collaborate to meet students' needs. Schedules are built with the district's core values of wellness, equity and engagement at their core. Class schedules must allow for a variety of whole-class, small-group, partner, and individualized instructional options, as well as time for educators to collaborate within and across grade levels and subject areas.

The District recognizes that students' educational needs in the future may be different than they are today. As examples, the nature and use of digital literacy has become more integrated ubiquitously throughout the schools and students need to develop skills such as collaboration and communication. Therefore, prioritizing a facility design for a future school that is flexible to meet these evolving needs is paramount. To that end, the District will revisit the scheduling procedure and the time allotments to allow time for students to work in STEAM Learning Labs as well as unstructured spaces that they configure and reconfigure for planning, executing and communicating their learning.

## **Teaching Methodology and Structure**

### **Administrative and Academic Organization/Structure**

Douglas, Conant, and Gates elementary schools are each led by a fulltime principal and assistant principal with teachers organized into grade level teams. This structure, with an administrative team, will remain the same in the new building.

### **Curriculum Delivery Methods and Practices**

Classrooms are heterogeneously grouped by grade level, and teachers use a variety of whole-class, small group, partner, and individual work to engage learners. Each teacher in grades K-5 presents all content material, and some sixth grade teachers are discipline-specific.

Specialized services, which include English language education, special education, and reading instruction, are a combination of push-in inclusion support and pull-out instruction. Additionally, trained assistants supplement mathematics instruction.

Within each learning community, the mathematics, ELA, STE, social studies, and social-emotional curricula are delivered in general education classrooms. ABRSD wants teachers designing lessons, assessment, and instructional spaces based on the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), so that students can learn from instructional practices and materials that are accessible to them, including the ways in which they take in information, process as they learn, show what they have learned, and engage with instruction and materials.

However, there are very limited spaces for students to collaborate, whole grade meetings and presentations, and areas for project-making that occur over time and require materials and larger spaces to be completed. Thus, the District envisions extended learning areas shared by general education classrooms within a learning community and large enough to hold an entire grade level. The extended learning area would provide opportunities for interdisciplinary teaching and learning, multi-class presentations and gatherings, as well as student break out space. Similarly, shared small group rooms would allow break out opportunities for passively supervised independent small group work. The District

also envisions STEAM Learning Labs for more hands-on and problem-based learning as described in the STE curriculum section. To further collaboration among educator teams, multi-sized flexible conferencing spaces will yield opportunities to create collaborative lessons, units, projects, and investigations, provide the ability for timely student feedback and support, and space for professional learning as well as individual educator workspace.

The Department of Educational Technology supports digital learning in each of the schools by focusing on the goals and strategic action items presented in the [2021 District Technology Plan](#). The plan focuses on future-ready learning, universal design for learning (UDL) and instructional practices in support of the [District Curriculum Accommodation Plan](#) and is aligned with the District's Long Range Strategic Plan. The four key elements of the plan include Teaching & Professional Learning, Digital Learning, Leadership & Culture, and Infrastructure, Productivity, & Innovation.

## **Mathematics**

ABRSD believes that student mathematics learning is rooted in discourse and collaboration with peers and staff and is tied to tasks that are challenging. Students should have the opportunity through appropriately challenging tasks to connect the mathematical content standards to the standards for mathematical practice (mathematical habits of mind).

The District's elementary mathematics instruction, which is delivered for 60 minutes daily by grade level teachers in the general classroom, is inviting, engaging, and dynamic. Students are encouraged to participate in mathematical dialogue with their teachers and peers. Groups collaborate to make meaning of different situations, make conjectures, and defend their arguments. Teachers foster an environment that builds student confidence and enables them to become independent thinkers who can problem solve and work collaboratively with peers in different situations.

## **Mathematics: Future Design Needs**

The needs of an elementary mathematics classroom are varied as many different activities take place in the course of a day, week, and month. A space that is large enough to offer flexibility for mathematics learning to take place is essential. Smaller breakout spaces/offices will be needed for math specialists.

A large meeting area where students can gather without desks or chairs is helpful for the reading of mathematics picture books, classroom routines like counting around the classroom, number talks, and strategy shares. It will be helpful if this is near a screen to project student work, problems to consider, videos or other visuals for mathematical discourse.

The room should offer enough space that teachers can meet with a small group of students while other small groups are spread around the room. These groups may use manipulatives and whiteboards to solve problems, technology to explain their thinking or practice skills or work independently. Students

are encouraged to choose mathematical tools that are on display and readily available in their classroom. Groups of students work together at tables, on a rug or floor space, or standing at a counter. Engaging in mathematical games is another strategy teachers use to deepen student understanding.

Many classrooms utilize rug or floor space during this time. While some students work in groups, others work independently on a formative task or pre-test. Generally, these students are given the choice to use a space in the classroom where they will not be distracted, or teachers provide privacy folders at a table. To culminate a math session, teachers bring the entire class back to a whole group setting and engage in conversation or complete a formative assessment.

At times, the teacher or a student may want to have a discussion with the whole class or allow students time to independently complete an activity. For this, teachers will need a space where all students can have an individual space to work. These seats should also have a view of the classroom screen or projector for times when student work is projected, videos are viewed for a 3-act task, or a teacher displays an idea for students to think about together.

## **English Language Arts (ELA)**

The District is dedicated to the development of lifelong readers and writers through the use of balanced literacy instruction that takes place in a Reader's and Writer's Workshop. This approach is characterized by the explicit and implicit teaching of research-based instructional practices. Students are provided with ample time to practice their developing skills as well as transfer knowledge and ideas between/across all content areas. The motivation for an interdisciplinary approach to literacy is the extensive research establishing that students who wish to be "life" ready must be proficient in reading complex informational text independently in a variety of content areas.

The ELA curriculum exposes students to a rich diversity of high-quality, authentic literature from multiple genres, cultures, and time periods. The K - 6 standards include expectations for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language applicable to a range of disciplines, including ELA, social studies, science (STE), mathematics, the arts, and comprehensive health. ABRSD approaches literacy instruction as a shared responsibility within the school.

### **English Language Arts: Future Design Needs**

The 21st century classroom structure aims to create a productive environment in which teachers are facilitators of learning and students can develop the necessary skills to be successful in the workplace. Small breakout space/offices for the reading specialists will also be important. Flexibility within the classroom is essential to increase student productivity, and encourage collaboration and communication. Key design elements include:

- Literacy-Rich Environment that encompasses a wide variety of books at various levels and incorporates many genres. Bookshelves should be at a kid-friendly height and the area should be

inviting. There should be wall space for anchor charts, comfortable seating, lots of natural light, and inviting baskets filled with high-quality literature. Audio books and headphones should be available for students. Books in multiple languages should be available to represent the diversity within the classroom. Titles that represent diverse cultures should be available so all children can see themselves within the pages of the books that are read.

- Early childhood classrooms should have plenty of space for role play and imaginary play with literacy materials available (ex. dining area with menus, grocery area with shopping lists, etc.).
- An area should be set aside for dramatic interpretation of literature and drama that includes a stage, microphone, technology to record performances, and a seating area for an audience.
- Adaptable classroom layout that can be easily changeable based on what the students are working on. Tables (rather than desks) should include various options: high tables, low tables, round and square tables - a variety to promote collaboration when students work in small groups or pairs. A designated space where students can gather for mini-lessons, read alouds, and group discussions is essential. Incorporating a rug and comfortable seating is desired.
- Flexible seating to give choice of where to sit and what to sit on will promote students' ability to act on their natural instincts to move their bodies. Large pillows, couches, bean-bags, yoga balls, stools and tables are options.
- Small teacher work area - consolidate supplies and use a kidney shaped table as a desk. This serves multiple purposes for collaborating with students and having supplies readily available.
- Reading, writing, and general materials should be stored in an area easily accessed by students including whiteboards, magnetic letters, markers, pencils, and crayons.
- Accessibility to Technology: Students should have access to iPads and/or Chrome books to support instruction and be available for students for research purposes.
- A book room is needed for guided reading lessons that are neatly organized and easily accessible by educators for small group lessons. A QR reader and Chromebook/iPad should be available for checking in/out sets of texts for easily tracking materials. This should be located in an easily-accessible and welcoming area with a small seating area for educators to preview books or work in small groups/partners to preview books and discuss lesson design.

## **Science, Technology and Engineering (STE)**

The purpose of science and technology/engineering education is to foster students' curiosity and creativity while developing foundational understandings and engagement in the science and engineering fields. Investigations in science and technology/engineering involve the integration of science/engineering practices and disciplinary core ideas: students working like scientists and engineers. The District would like to include STEAM Learning Labs to enhance teaching and integration of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics and to:

- Develop habits of mind, critical thinking and real world connections to learning
- Create coherent STEAM learning experiences
- Deepen connections to the District's core values of engagement (relevance); equity (multiple access points and opportunities to express learning); and wellness (mindset as learner success)

and joy in creating)

Additional break out spaces would allow us to increase project-based learning opportunities. The improved facility would incorporate numerous “green building” features to improve the overall efficiency and sustainability of the facility. ABRSD would like these features labeled and identified for students as a real-world application of science, technology, and engineering.

In the elementary schools, technology is currently widely available in each classrooms. Students in younger grades have access to iPad centers and third- through sixth-graders have 1-to-1 access to a ChromeBook. At this time, ChromeBooks are stored in classroom carts and remain at school. Each elementary classroom is equipped with Audio/Visual equipment which includes an interactive whiteboard with speakers and mounted short-throw or ceiling mounted projectors.

All full-time, certified educators receive a district-issued laptop device and a document camera, both of which are on replacement cycles that meet manufacturer recommendations. Some classrooms are equipped with FM capabilities based upon student needs and/or building-based improvement projects completed by individual principals. Special Education areas are equipped with technology tools that provide accessibility features based on student Individualized Education Plans and/or programmatic needs. All buildings have 100% wireless coverage and are connected with 10GB uplinks back to the main network MDF located at the RJ Grey Junior High School.

All devices are supported by a Technology team that includes the Director of Educational Technology, a Digital Learning Coordinator, a Systems Administrator, 4.48 FTE Desktop/Network Support, 2.26 FTE non-certified Instructional Technology support, 1.6 FTE Data Management, and 2.0 FTE Media & Technical Operations. Annual technology-based operating budgets are managed by the Director of Educational Technology to support technology resources including infrastructure, software/hardware needs, print services, and annual maintenance contracts.

### **Science, Technology and Engineering: Future Design Needs**

Based on the most recent curriculum redesign, space for educators and students to conduct experiments and inquiry work with district-made STE investigations will be needed. STE instructional spaces will ideally include flexible spaces as well as the following design components that allow for STE instruction to be successfully delivered within the general classroom and in Extended Learning Areas or a STEAM Learning Lab:

- Water available in every classroom and at multiple locations in the STEAM Learning Lab (or extended learning areas). At least one sink should be a deep/work sink to facilitate cleaning specimens and glassware and filling of large basins of water for activities like density investigations.
- Electricity safely available at each workstation via outlets on the floor. This is important for activities involving laptops, other digital technology (digital microscopes, digital probes, etc).

- The cabinetry should include some large, deep floor-to-ceiling units to hold the district-made STE investigations stored in large (24" deep) containers and large-scale models when not in use. These areas would also allow for experimentation with plants or animals in various simulated “environments.”
- Ample counter space is necessary to put projects such as plants, posters, models, and experimental set up aside between classes.
- The room should be large enough to allow flexible workstation configurations and a rug area to facilitate whole group instruction, such as debriefing and making meaningful discussion after STE activities.
- All rooms should have light-blocking shades for activities involving light and waves.
- Furniture should include adjustable height tables on wheels that can be moved to create multiple student group configurations and stools that promote core strength.
- In addition to indoor areas for STE learning, students should also regularly engage with and explore the environment outside of the classrooms. Easy access to, and views of, the outdoors, along with open-air meeting spaces where students can sit, listen, write in journals, and debrief, are essential bases for outdoor STE investigations.

As the District continues to implement the 2016 MA Digital Literacy and Computer Science Standards, areas of growth for the District include:

- Flexible learning areas designed to support STEM/STEAM learning, technology engineering, and collaborative group work.
- Updated Library Media Centers to support AASL/MSLA frameworks which include information/media literacy.
- Learning spaces created using UDL principles (i.e. have built-in FM capabilities, etc.)

## Social Studies

The primary purpose of history and social science education is to prepare students to have the knowledge and skills to become thoughtful and active participants in a democratic society and a complex world. The future of democracy depends on students’ development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will enable them to embrace democracy’s potential while recognizing its challenges and inherent dilemmas. The curriculum responds to current scholarship and includes features designed to help students develop the skills to participate in and perhaps lead a society that will be more demographically and culturally diverse than any democratic society of the past.

The 2018 Framework includes new components designed to strengthen students’ skills for informed citizenship and political participation. Standards for history and social science practice emphasize the following skills:

- Formulating questions
- Conducting research
- Evaluating sources



- Synthesizing information

Standards for literacy in history and social science set expectations for analytical reading and logical writing and speaking, skills essential to political equality and civic engagement.

ABRSD's social studies curriculum integrates the Guiding Principles from the 2018 MA History and Social Science Curriculum Framework, which combines the learning of content and skills in the study of history, geography, economics, civics, and government. Through the implementation of the History and Social Science curriculum, students become accustomed to being interviewers, investigators, history detectives, and researchers.

### **Social Studies: Future Design Needs**

In literacy-rich social studies classrooms, the physical environments are going to be most effective if they provide students with visual and tactile stimuli that have meaning for the child, and with which they can interact in some ways. The ideal literacy-rich social studies classroom will have available space to offer students information, images, and artifacts that demonstrate social studies concepts and shape students' incidental learning and build a sense of community. Classrooms will be designed to maximize social studies learning, providing students with an opportunity to interact with and analyze maps and globes, timelines, and co-constructed materials.

Classroom layouts should be adaptable and easily changeable with flexible seating that includes various work surfaces- high tables, low tables, round and square tables- to promote student collaboration. A designated interest area and resources corner with tables should be available so that students can easily access materials. Although traditional roll-down maps have been replaced with online resources, it would maximize learning if maps and globes are available so that students may examine these visual representations. Wall space in the classroom will be utilized to hang timelines, maps, charts, or other visual representation that can foster cross-curricular connections and make social studies a part of everyday conversations.

Bookshelves that are at a kid-friendly height are necessary for various resources, including reproductions of primary sources such as diary entries, maps, film, historical fiction, and newspaper accounts. The classroom library will contain a wide variety of books at various levels and incorporate many genres. Technology will be accessible to all students to support instruction and digital literacy, and it is a vehicle for students to take virtual tours, create their own timelines, and explore their social studies-related interests.

### **Media Center/Library**

The new Digital Literacy/Computer Science Frameworks and current research into the evolving role of 21st-century school libraries should be considered when visioning a new school building. Libraries are being reinvented as information becomes more readily accessible online. The role of libraries is more about connecting learners and constructing knowledge. As a result, libraries must

provide a welcoming common space with ready access to digital devices and flexible seating so that students can explore, research, communicate, and collaborate.

### **Library/Media Center: Future Design Needs**

The media center should be a place that encourages exploratory learning, critical digital literacy, and media literacy skills, and curates a collection of materials that reflect a diverse society and student populations.

The media center space and program should be designed with the explicit intent of effectively engaging students in learning the Digital Literacy and Computer Science (DLCS) standards. Incorporation of breakout spaces for collaborative and project-based learning, and a STEAM Learning Lab can provide flexibility for the type of learning experiences critical for students, allowing them to effectively use and create technology to solve complex problems and develop essential 21st-century literacy skills.

## **Visual and Performing Arts**

### **Visual Arts**

At the elementary school level, students develop their own creative visions through a wide variety of projects in two and three dimensional media, including drawing and painting, sculpture, ceramics, fabric, woodworking, architecture, digital art and interdisciplinary projects that connect to STEAM, humanities and performing arts curricula. While learning discrete skills in specific media and elements of art are valued, great emphasis is put on developing habits of mind that foster lifelong learning. These include creative problem solving, close observation, collaboration, and learning through play.

To meet this vision the visual arts classroom must be seen as a flexible learning space that can be easily reconfigured for a variety of instructional formats and media. The layout should include a large open area with a rug for whole class gatherings. There should also be room for at least six large tables with stools to accommodate group and individual work. Equipment should include a whiteboard, ceiling-mounted projector, document camera, projection screen, bulletin boards, drying racks, and daily access to laptops and tablets. Sufficient storage space is also essential for organizing art supplies and student work. Lastly, if a STEAM lab is not available elsewhere in the school, each table should also be equipped with detachable vices and electrical outlets.

In addition, if the visual and performing arts are to be infused across the curriculum in support of authentic project-based learning, it is essential that the school includes a dedicated, flexible space (separate from the cafeteria or gym) that could be used as a gallery for the visual arts, an intimate performance space for music and theater, and an exhibition space for all manner of student

presentations. Finally, the school's indoor and outdoor common areas should include ample room for displaying two and three-dimensional student work.

### **Performing Arts (Music and Theater)**

Music classes are offered to all students at least once a week and during traditional performing ensembles (chorus/band/orchestra). All students in grades K-6 participate in weekly general music classes. Additionally, all students in grades 5 and 6 participate in ensembles including band, orchestra or chorus. Instruction in these ensembles includes large group instruction that is scheduled concurrently, as well as small group instrumental lessons. Spaces specifically designed for music instruction with appropriate acoustical features would significantly improve student safety (hearing) and curriculum delivery in this area. Ensembles regularly need adequate performance spaces for rehearsals, formal and casual concerts. Music rooms with taller than average ceiling heights and ample acoustic treatment are ideal for multi-purpose activities including classroom activities, applied music techniques, choral music, parent/community performances, and instrumental music instruction.

The K-6 music curriculum includes: singing alone and in large ensembles; performing on instruments (Classroom instruments, keyboards, guitars, various percussion, and recorder) alone and in groups of various sizes; physical movement in response to music along with dramatic performance; reading and writing traditional and iconic music notation; analysis/evaluation of audio and visual performances – both live and on video/audio; and composition/creating music. The music program supports the need for the music space to be large, open, flexible, and carpeted.

### **Physical Education and Health**

ABRSD has a commitment to wellness, as exemplified in the district's core values. Wellness instruction comprises the areas of health, physical education, and general personal wellness. During physical education classes, students engage in a range of activities designed to develop physical abilities and increase fitness. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is currently reviewing the health curriculum, so as of yet, the District has not made any changes to the curriculum. Current health standards are shared among classroom teachers, nurses, counselors and PE teachers. For example, the nurse will work with teachers to design joint activities around such things as nutrition, heart health and tick precaution/safety.

Physical education classes are presently offered to all students K-6. Grades 1-6 meet for 45 minutes and kindergarten meets for 30-45 minutes depending on half or full day. Inclusion of the PK in the new building will allow us the opportunity for PK to be part of the rotation. PE classes take place in the gymnasium or on the fields/black top surrounding the schools.

The current gymnasium at the Douglas School is undersized and limits the physical education curriculum. It is too small to meet student needs and does not provide spaces for alternative wellness activities. Design features that would allow the gymnasium to support activities such as yoga, Project Adventure,

adjustable basketball backboards, wall mounted or floor sleeve volleyball standards, outdoor fitness circuit/stations, and a room designated just for yoga/relaxation that is soundproof, would align with the district's core value of wellness. While the other five elementary schools' gymnasiums are used for community basketball, that is not possible at Douglas. An expanded gymnasium would also provide for more space that is needed for the safety of students and spectators. Since the gymnasium is used for events after the school day and on weekends, the building design should incorporate security measures that carefully control how the gymnasium, as well as restrooms, are accessed outside of school hours.

A sampling of outdoor spaces adjacent to the schools include smaller playground structures for the primary grades (K-2), medium sized playground structures for upper grades (3-6), blacktop with painted play lines, full-sized basketball courts, a baseball diamond, and soccer size field space. Currently, there are outdoor nature play spaces at each school that were funded through the District's operating budget and a grant from the Acton Community Preservation Committee (CPC). These spaces would need to be replicated in the new outdoor space of the new school. Students use the fields, swings, blacktop area, playgrounds, and outdoor nature play spaces during recess. Additionally, students like to relax in the shade and observe the natural environment.

The District envisions that many of these outdoor spaces will be replicated in the new building project. Enhancements would include: covered picnic tables and sheltered areas that would accommodate a class or a grade level, paved walkways around the perimeter of the schools to be used by students and staff who participate in walking and running clubs before or after school, an artificial turf field as part of the play and P.E. space.

## English Language Education (ELE) Program

The ELE program's goal is to develop both social and more complex academic language skills that enable students to perform independently at grade level. Students' needs are met with a combination of in-class support and pull-out, small group sessions. The elementary certified teachers support English learners (ELs) to develop proficiency in listening, reading, writing and speaking within the context of the general education curriculum. ELE teachers communicate regularly with classroom teachers to review upcoming curriculum themes and content objectives in order to provide students with structured language development work in the context of those themes. ABRSD's ELE program provides services to students whose first languages include dozens of world languages.

DESE considers ABRSD to be a "mid-incident district" for English learners. There is currently one fulltime ELE teacher at Douglas and two fulltime teachers at both Gates and Conant, and there is not a plan to adjust staffing levels. Enrollment in the ELE program has remained relatively stable over the last few years, as shown below for each school year (based on October 1st count):

2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
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202	229	240	267	233
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Currently, the ELE teachers at Conant and Gates share a full-sized classroom, divided between them. This has worked out well to share materials resources. At Douglas, the ELE teacher shares a divided space with the learning center teacher.

### **English Language Education: Future Design Needs**

The English language educators can share a large classroom learning space. In the future, the district would like to explore how to share English learner caseloads across two buildings to maximize groupings and services.

As with other areas of the building, it will be critical to ensure there are enough flexible spaces for small group instruction. Furniture should be flexible and facilitate collaborative learning, creativity, problem solving and communication, as well as to leverage technology. There should be plenty of wall space to accommodate word walls, charts, word cues, photographs, and other visual displays that support language acquisition and learning. The learning space should also have a small, sub-separate area that is visible through windows, where students can access a listening and speaking center to practice their skills in these two critical areas.

### **Social Emotional Learning and Wellness**

The District goals and core values focus on the social emotional wellbeing of students, as well as their academic and learning needs. Each of the schools utilizes Responsive Classroom, an approach to teaching that focuses on helping students develop their academic, social, and emotional skills in a learning environment where students can do their best learning. Whole-school celebrations and assemblies, concerts, performances, and exhibitions help to foster a sense of community. Movement breaks are woven into the day for many students to improve attention and engagement.

### **Nursing Services**

Currently, there is a full time nurse assigned to each elementary building in the district. The mission of the ABRSD school nurses is to promote the safety and wellness of more than 5700 students and more than 800 staff during the school day in order to optimize learning. Typically, the school nurses care for an average total of 300 students each school day. The nurses collaborate with a host of people, including families, the school physician, and outside physicians to support students who are injured or who have chronic medical conditions. Per state law, they administer vision, hearing, posture, and BMI screenings to students and review physical exam results and immunizations as required by state law across the elementary grades. As more and more students are contending with diabetes, life threatening allergies, and many other illness, areas within the health office for privacy have become more important.

## **Counseling Services**

The ABRSD recognizes that children grow and develop at different rates and in different ways. To a greater or lesser extent, children may require assistance and support in adjusting to particular stages of personal, social or cognitive development. Within each school, the school counselor works cooperatively with parents, teachers, administrators and other specialists to ensure a successful school experience for students. ABRSD works to support each student to develop a positive sense of self, the skills to interact productively, and the maturity to make wise decisions. Through this cooperative effort, students will be able to utilize their potential in constructive, responsible and satisfying ways.

Direct support to children in the school setting may involve individual and/or group counseling on a weekly, short-term or crisis intervention basis. School counseling encourages age-appropriate social development, helps children develop academic confidence, and promotes understanding of personal/emotional issues. Counselors regularly consult with parents, teachers, specialists and administrators to assess a student's needs and to plan an appropriate course of action. Each counselor consults regularly with staff in the building to coordinate services provided to students. It is important for the school counselor to be co-located with the building administration, the school psychologist, and other related service providers in order to maximize collaboration and communication. The current buildings do not facilitate this due to layout and space constraints.

## **Social-Emotional Learning and Wellness: Future Design Needs**

The District believes that climate and school culture have an effect on the success of social and emotional as well as academic learning. There is a desire to make large schools feel smaller and more connected while focusing on social emotional learning (SEL), positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), community building, student wellness, and engagement. To achieve this, staff and students are organized into smaller learning communities or pods. Nursing and counseling services are central to supporting the overall health and well-being of students.

Understanding the social-emotional needs of students at specific developmental levels is an important factor in providing quality instruction. Ensuring the building is designed to take this into account and have spaces specifically dedicated to movement and mindfulness activities, will help us foster prosocial behaviors. Attention to the use of space, natural light, color, movement break spaces, whole school gathering spaces, and placement of student work displays will all help to create a student-centered and inclusive atmosphere.

Learners need a variety of seating options, including stools, standing desks, and soft seating, all of which should be easily movable from one location to another within a learning space. Increased visibility and natural lighting across learning spaces will make differentiating learning easier and students healthier.

Spaces within or between classroom pods/groupings that accommodate an entire grade level (75-100 students) are necessary to encourage regular movement breaks, whole-group presentations, grade-level meetings, and other collaborative learning experiences. Well-designed, age-appropriate outdoor

learning spaces will also contribute to improved social emotional and academic learning.

### **Future Nursing Services**

The scope of nursing services is not expected to change, nor is the current staffing level. Each elementary school would continue to need its own nurse. In a twin school, the health office/nursing suite should be centrally-located and shared between both buildings, as well as the early childhood program. A shared health office would ideally have two entrances, one for each school, but would share nurse work areas, clinic space, and storage. There should be two bathrooms located within the nursing suite.

### **Future Counseling Services**

Each elementary school would continue to need its own counselor. In a twin school, the counseling office should be centrally-located and shared between both buildings. It is also important for the school counselor to be co-located with the building administration, the school psychologist, and other related service providers in order to maximize collaboration and communication.

The district would like to allow for one additional, shared office space in the counseling area for wraparound services. Otherwise, the scope of counseling services is not expected to change, nor is the current staffing level.

## **Special Education Programs**

Special Education services address the individual and diverse learning, social, and emotional needs of students who require specialized instruction, and/or related services in order to access the general education curriculum. ABRSD special educators work collaboratively with general educators to provide a range of evidence-based specialized instruction to meet the needs of a wide range of students.

In February 2017, DESE conducted an on-site Coordinated Program Review. ABRSD's Special Education programs meet or exceed all rubric elements and regulations as reviewed and corrected through the DESE Coordinated Review process.

Currently, 15.6% of students in ABRSD have an Individual Education Plan. Balancing inclusion supports with specially designed pull-out instruction ensures that all students receive appropriate individualized instruction. Special education services range from the least restrictive (for example, in-class support services) to more restrictive (significant amount of multiple services out of the regular education classroom). Elementary students across the district are supported through a variety of teaching models such as whole group instruction, flexible grouping, small group instruction, and individualized instruction.

Programming includes specialized programs, learning centers, and inclusion/push-in integrated programs which address student needs for social-emotional support and academic support. Students receive a range of services from accommodations in general education classes to more supported

programming in substantially separate, co-taught and learning center models. Expertise in the special education department is provided by a range of specialists, speech language pathologists, school psychologists, occupational and physical therapists, board certified behavior analysts, and a team chairperson.

Special Education faculty and related service staff are typically assigned smaller instructional spaces. Currently, some staff members share space or are in spaces that are too small and not conducive to providing high-quality instruction that is consistent with the District's vision. Because many of the existing special education learning spaces are too small to accommodate the needs of the students, staff often need to relocate small group instruction to various areas across the buildings. Additionally, students who use wheelchairs cannot attend Gates or Douglas, as they are not accessible.

### **Conant Elementary**

At 14.3%, the percentage of students with disabilities at Conant is lower than the District's. Conant houses resource and learning center programs. The *Connections* resource program is comprised of two programs that support students identified with a disability that impacts social functioning and communication, such as autism spectrum disorder or a social/communication disability. Often, these are children who transition from the early childhood program. Conant is also home to three learning centers that provide services to students with a variety of disabilities. These students participate fully in general education with accommodations and specially designed instruction to address individual needs. There are no anticipated programming changes. Conant special education staff currently includes one IEP team chairperson, five special educators, 15 teaching assistants, one school psychologist, two FTE speech/language pathologists, and part-time BCBA, occupational therapist and physical therapist.

Four special education teachers currently share one learning space. OT, PT, Speech, reading and math staff are assigned smaller instructional spaces that are too small and are not conducive to learning due to noise. Support services are often provided outside of the classroom in hallways. The counselor's office is located near the custodian and cleaning supplies closet, which is the opposite side of the building away from classrooms. PT services are provided on the stage in the cafeteria or hallway, which is loud and can lead to confidentiality issues.

### **Douglas Elementary**

At 15.5%, the percentage of students with disabilities at Douglas is aligned with the District's. Douglas is home to two learning centers that provide services to students who have a variety of disabilities. These students participate fully in general education with accommodations and specially designed instruction to address individual needs. Douglas is also home to the Nurturing Educational Support Team (NEST), which provides support for students with a broad range of academic and social needs. This specialized program offers students a small group setting for direct instruction in math and language arts, executive functioning, and social-emotional skills. The district plans to expand this program into a language-based learning program in the future, so would need additional space to do so. Douglas special education staff currently includes one IEP team chairperson, three special education teachers,



seven teaching assistants, one school psychologist, two speech/language pathologists, and part-time BCBA, occupational therapist and physical therapist.

It is important to note that in order for students with IEPs to access two of the learning centers at Douglas, they must walk through the cafeteria (sometimes while lunch is being served) to reach the modular where the occupational and physical therapist and two special educators are located.

### **Gates Elementary**

Gates Elementary, with 15.4% students with IEPs, houses one K-3 resource program that provides intensive supports and specially designed instruction for students who require additional supports within the general education classroom and/or accommodations or modifications to the curriculum. The resource program emphasizes the development of self-advocacy skills, greater independence, and responsibility for learning. Gates is also home to three learning centers that provide services to students with a variety of disabilities. Students who receive learning center support participate fully in general education with accommodations and specially designed instruction to address individual needs. In the future, the district plans to expand the resource program to include grades 4-6, so would need additional space to do so. Gates special education staff currently includes one IEP team chairperson, four special education teachers, eight special education assistants, one school psychologist, two speech language pathologists, and part-time BCBA, occupational therapist and physical therapists.

### **Future Special Education Supports**

Special education learning spaces are situated alongside general education classrooms, allowing staff to communicate and collaborate throughout the day. The building design will need to include more appropriate special education spaces that are located throughout the building. Some students require small group instruction, so breakout spaces connected to the associated special education programs are needed to provide these services while minimizing travel time and disruption to the day. The building also needs several small calming/sensory spaces and should also include several small observation spaces with two-way mirrors so parents and staff can observe students for evaluation purposes.

The design of special education learning spaces should be sensory-friendly with care given to views, sightlines, sounds, and smells. These sensory inputs can be under- or overstimulating for many students. Ideally the hallways in the preschool and kindergarten learning areas should be designed to discourage running and eloping. The mechanical system should be designed to minimize visual distraction, excessive forced air, and ambient noise. The lighting of these spaces should include full-spectrum lighting with dimmable controls. To minimize visual clutter, the color and layout of the room should minimize hues and elements that can be overwhelming. The adjacencies to other programmatic spaces will be important for accessibility for this population and to ensure optimal acoustic performance.

The special education department also includes a number of specialists and staff in supervisory roles, requiring a special education department suite. The department suite would house offices for the IEP team chairperson, school psychologist, speech language pathologists, counselor, and other related service providers. For related services staff like the occupational and physical therapists who are not in the building every day, the department suite should contain a few offices that serve as “remote campsites.” These would be shared desk spaces for itinerant service providers to set up a workspace on the days they are in the building. The department suite also needs to include two or three spaces for IEP and special education building team meetings that can support up to 15 adults at one time.

In addition, as a collaborative member of Concord Area Special Education Collaborative (CASE), the District also houses a substantially separate CASE program and considers CASE an integral part of the ABRSD school community. As appropriate, CASE students join their grade level buddy classroom for academics, specials, and lunch/recess. It is important to ensure the CASE Collaborative program will have classroom and office spaces in the new building, and District administrators will work with CASE leadership to identify specific needs.

## Early Childhood Program

The Carol Huebner Early Childhood Program (CHECP), operated by the Student Services Department, is an integrated early childhood learning environment for children ages 3-5 years old. CHECP provides an inclusive preschool for children with and without disabilities to learn and grow at their own pace. Children with identified special education needs and students who do not have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are educated side-by-side, meeting required IDEA regulations pertaining to inclusion in the least restrictive environment. The curriculum is developmentally based, child-directed and aligned with the Massachusetts Early Childhood Learning Standards and Curriculum Guidelines/ Frameworks.

### *Carol Huebner Early Childhood Program Philosophy:*

- All children can be successful.
- All children can learn and develop.
- All children learn and develop at their own pace given their unique learning styles.
- All children learn through active exploration of their environments.
- All children learn through interaction with peers and adults.
- All children need a nurturing, predictable environment in which to grow and learn.
- Play is the foundation of a child's learning and development.
- All children learn best in an inclusive, child-centered, developmentally appropriate environment.
- The role of adults is to support and facilitate each child's learning.

CHECP currently has eight classrooms as well as parent drive-in/drop-in itinerant services (occupational therapy, speech/language therapy, physical therapy) for students requiring those special education related services. Half-day and full-day integrated services are provided across six of the classrooms

(nine sections; three full-day and six half-day), meeting four days per week. Most students spend a portion of each day participating in an integrated preschool class in order to foster social growth. By the end of June 2018, The Early Childhood Program was serving 139 students in a variety of services, including 76 students receiving special education services as outlined in their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

State requirements for integrated settings require that class makeup not exceed 50% students with IEPs, with a maximum of seven children with IEPs per class. While overall enrollment for children with IEPs has remained fairly stable, the number of children requiring specialized instruction in applied behavioral analysis increased by 35% last year (23 in June 2018 vs. 17 in June 2017). Below are the historical enrollment numbers as reported on June 30th for the last five years.

	<b>June 2015</b>	<b>June 2016</b>	<b>June 2017</b>	<b>June 2018</b>
<b>Total Enrollment</b>	138	147	143	139
<b>Children with IEPs</b>	76	76	72	76

CHECP program uses an integrated therapy model whenever possible. The specialists (occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech language pathologists, school psychologist, English language educator) collaborate constantly across the school day to discuss children's needs and learning objectives across all learning areas. Some therapy occurs in the classroom setting, while other therapy occurs in separate therapy rooms, depending on the individual needs of each child.

Across both PreK sites, ABRSD currently employs eight special educators, five speech-language pathologists (SLP), three occupational therapists, one physical therapist, one school psychologist, approximately 25 special education assistants or ABA trainers, an Early Childhood Coordinator, and a part-time administrative assistant who provide direct services and/or support services to students, as well as perform evaluations.

### **Acton CHECP Site**

Six of the eight preschool classrooms are currently housed in a former elementary school, now the district Administration Building, in Acton, which was built in 1959. The District Capital Improvement Plan and Master Planning completed in 2016-17 determined that the preschool in the Administration Building was in significant need of relocation. The current Acton CHECP space was not designed for this age group or program and has been extensively retrofitted to attempt to meet the needs of preschool-aged children. The building is shared with the district's administrative offices and community education program. There are no art, music, physical education teachers or a nurse, and no opportunity for students or staff to collaborate with students and staff in other

grades.

The program also has two classrooms that provide specialized instruction for students who require individual and small group support using the principles and teaching methodology in applied behavioral analysis (ABA). Given this format and the students' needs, direct instruction generally occurs 1:1 or 2:1. Children in the preschool ABA programs require small group instruction and/or discrete trials, and need connected breakout space to provide these services while minimizing travel time and disruption to their day. The ABA trainers and staff collect an inordinate amount of data. Currently, this data is collected manually and stored in thick binders that staff then aggregate to inform instruction and IEP goals and objectives. This could be accomplished more effectively and efficiently utilizing technology.

Preschool bathrooms and several rooms in the Administration Building where students receive speech-language and motor therapy are not accessible for students with physical disabilities. To access some of these rooms, staff and children need to walk through other therapy spaces or a custodial storage room. Currently, there are no smaller spaces to meet student calming, break or sensory needs, or to provide one-to-one instruction or assessment, so staff is forced to deliver these types of supports in the hallway. Nursing is not available in the Administration Building, and children must walk to the building next door if they need health services.

### **Boxborough CHECP Site**

The other two preschool classrooms are housed at Blanchard Memorial School in Boxborough. The playground at Blanchard Memorial School is not accessible for students with physical disabilities. While related services staff (OT, PT, SLP) have office spaces in both buildings, they are not located in close proximity to the classrooms. When services cannot be provided in the classroom, staff spend a lot of time bringing children from one location to the other. The classrooms at Blanchard do have a nurse on-site.

### **Future CHECP Configuration and Needs**

ABRSD envisions an early childhood entrance that is welcoming, bright and cheerful from the outside in and includes an office for the early childhood coordinator and administrative assistant. A separate driveway for special education transportation and a parent motor vehicle drop-off area are needed to ensure student safety for the building. There should also be dedicated family parking near the preschool-related services staff (OT, PT, SLP) offices so that families accessing drive-in services do not have to walk from another building as they do currently.

Eight or nine classroom spaces are needed. These spaces should have lots of natural light and be partially carpeted to facilitate morning meeting time and partially tiled to support messy preschool projects. There should be sufficient space in each classroom for various dramatic play areas, work and exploration, and a sensory/calming area for children to access as needed. There should be a vestibule of sorts in the entryway of each classroom to keep backpacks, boots, jackets, and more separate from

instructional spaces and out of the hallway or pod area. Classroom furniture should be a combination of hard and soft seating and workspaces that are both flexible and movable. Within or between every two preschool classroom, there should be a combined storage area and bathroom, with one sink and a large storage area for instructional materials and items for dramatic play centers, which rotate every few weeks. Classrooms should have at least one sink inside each classroom.

Each preschool classroom should have access to enough iPads for each child, whether through shared iPad carts or iPad stations in each room. There should be additional iPad charging stations available for adult iPads, to facilitate the data collection required for each children with IEPs, and especially for the ABA program. Additional assistive technology should be available for students in the classroom.

A small teaching space adjacent to each classroom is needed for one-on-one instruction and assessment. These should be close to the preschool classrooms and ideally co-located near the related services staff (SLP, OT, PT, psychologist) supporting K-6. The preschool also needs multiple, small breakout spaces for consultation meetings, staff collaboration, and ABA clinics and IEP meetings with families. The preschool classrooms should also be located near the nurses' offices for the elementary schools.

The CHECP should have separate office spaces for the coordinator/administrative assistant, school psychologist, shared office spaces for the speech-language pathologists, and a shared motor space for the occupational and physical therapists. The motor space should be appropriately-sized to provide therapy for students using a variety of gross motor equipment, including suspended equipment (e.g. adaptive swing for sensory needs) and lots of large storage for big pieces of equipment. The therapy rooms should be in close proximity or connected to classrooms to minimize travel time and optimize staff collaboration. Classrooms and speech/language therapy rooms should be acoustically sound for students with hearing loss. Because of the number of observations and evaluations conducted by the program, there is also a need for a small group testing and observation area with two-way glass. Spaces should be flexible so that they can adapt to changes in educational programming and curriculum needs.

CHECP needs an early childhood playground that is created using universal design for learning, that is not only accessible but also inclusive. This space should have plenty of shade and offer a variety of activities, including crawling, riding bikes and playing on various apparatus. It is important to be accessible to young children of all abilities. This could be shared outdoor play space with lower grades, as well as a smaller gym space that would lend itself to age-appropriate instruction. It is important that this space be enclosed/secure to ensure safety for students who elope, and it should not be located in the middle of a parking circle as it is now.

Hallways/space outside classrooms should be designed to be used for both learning and play. Apparatus capable of being stored to the side of hallways and materials/equipment that hang out of reach off of wall hooks would allow for areas to be used for multiple purposes. A small alcove in the entryway of each classroom is needed to support students transitioning in and out of the

classroom with their outdoor clothing/boots, backpacks, etc. Items that can be easily removed could turn interior spaces into play areas in inclement weather. Finally, children enrolled in CHECP should have access to specials a few times per week, with a focus on play.

## **Teacher Planning and Professional Learning**

Research is clear that collaborative time among educators improves student learning outcomes. Grade level collaborative teams have shared preparation time four days per week as well as Thursday afternoons when students have early release days. Presently, there is insufficient teacher planning space, and teachers generally meet within their individual classrooms as space allows.

The district's professional learning program is designed to provide appropriate growth opportunities for all educators at all stages of their careers. Elementary educators meet by grade-level and in individual, self-selected workshops, all in an effort to improve teaching and learning. A future facility should include conference-style educator meeting space to reflect the increasingly collaborative nature of curriculum delivery by grade-level teams. Any spaces like this should be located by grade-level classrooms and be distinct from a staff lunchroom, which will be utilized solely for breaks and socialization.

Faculty meetings and all-staff professional learning offerings are currently held in the building library, in classrooms, or in the cafeteria, which are not comfortable, are often crowded, and lack heating/cooling. Currently, there is not adequate lighting or technology available for presentations.

## **Future Teacher Planning and Professional Learning**

The provision for flexible and collaborative meeting space would allow staff to maximize planning and professional learning opportunities. Smaller collaborative spaces for grade level teams to utilize, combined with larger open areas for whole-faculty professional learning are needed to support educators in ongoing professional learning.

## **Lunch Program**

Lunch is prepared and served in each of the school kitchens. The Parker Damon Building has a shared kitchen, which allows sharing food and staff between the two schools. Meals are prepared on site. The kitchen in the new school can also function in this way. Given the number of students that will be in the building, it will be important to have more than one cafeteria connected to the shared kitchen.

The district values the ability to provide healthy, locally sourced food. Whenever possible, the district incorporates local food, currently utilizing vegetables from the junior high school garden as available. Junior high students also prepare food as part of classroom projects, and they plant and maintain the vegetable garden in raised beds in the school courtyard. The district would like to have a similar program involving students growing a garden on the new school grounds.

Currently, there are 25-minute lunches in each of the district elementary schools. To support student health, it would be ideal to serve lunch to multiple grades at a time closer to the middle of their school day. This change would also make the cafeteria available for a larger portion of the day for additional uses such as whole-grade meetings, project learning, movement activities, etc. Because CHECP will be co-located, it would also be possible to serve lunch to preschoolers who attend a full-day program.

## **Transportation**

ABRSD provides transportation to all students. As a regional district that applies for and receives a percentage of transportation expenses reimbursed annually from the Commonwealth, ABRSD is mandated to transport all individuals regardless of home distance from school and cannot charge a fee for this service. The ABRSD Elementary model of open enrollment and school choice for all presents unique challenges for the transportation system as a whole. The need to transport all students from any geographic location while keeping ride times reasonable creates the need for a very large system with many buses operating concurrently. As a result, the need to provide solutions around improved pedestrian, school bus, and general traffic flow is heightened.

## **Functional and Spatial Relationships**

The vision for the school is to provide adaptable, flexible, and varied learning space that celebrates community values, well-being, and student learning. The building should feel physically connected throughout with attention to interior and site circulation. Ample exhibition and curation of student work will be visible throughout the spaces. It will be important to consider the nine-year age span that will exist in a building that potentially houses preschool (age three) through grade six (age twelve) when planning and making decisions around design, flow, light, finishes, and furniture.

The Media Center will serve as the physical and value center of the building benefiting from STEAM learning labs, small group rooms, and isolated quiet spaces within its organization. A key consideration will be the separation of classroom spaces from public-use spaces by the community. This is especially important if multiple schools are located within the same building. Deliberate design thought should be given to ensure shared spaces are equitable, identifiable, and accessible.

Classroom adjacencies will encourage collaboration with flexible learning spaces within and beyond the classroom. Special education spaces will be sprinkled throughout the building, as well as shared extended learning spaces between grade level teams. Classrooms will have the ability to be grouped either by grade level or organizational cohorts depending on room assignments. Specialty classrooms such as art, music, media, STEAM, and teacher collaboration spaces will have deliberate relationships to the core classrooms to encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration and equitable access.

## Security and Visual Access Requirements

ABRSD is committed to ensuring a safe environment for all students and staff; to improve public safety for community members who visit or use school property; and diminish the potential for personal and district loss or destruction of property. The school's approach to security and visual access is as follows:

- Clear administrative procedures and policies in place to oversee district safety and security programs.
- Regular and continued vulnerability assessments conducted to observe security in place, identify security deficiencies, determine level of security needed, and make recommendations for improvement.
- Effective management of security using multiple forms of communication; policies and procedures; physical security; training; and response plans involving administration, staff, parents, and students.
- CORI checks for all faculty, staff, volunteers, contractors, and vendors who are on school property. Staff are required to visibly display identification badges when school is in session.
- Safe and secure main entrance and lobby including single entry door per school or program with a door-release button; intercom and video surveillance, and a visitor management system in place. Additional exterior doors should be locked at the start of the school day (others are egress only and monitored).
- Safe access for kitchen, facility, and shipping/receiving separate from school traffic to main entrance.
- Installation of signage to direct visitors, contractors, and vendors to the administration area to be processed for access. Doors and windows should have identification. All occupied rooms have route-of-travel maps on walls.
- The perimeter of the campus is clearly identified from public property. Landscaping supports clear sightlines of the school building exterior.
- Safe and secure vehicular access to the building including the use of bollards, no-parking areas and designated drop-off areas. Separation of vehicular and bus traffic patterns. Safe pathways provided for pedestrians and bicyclists. Emergency and public safety vehicle access is clear.
- Best practices for access control systems in place for building, classroom, and support space access.
- Adequate exterior lighting provided around walkways, doorways, and in parking areas with awareness of minimizing light trespass on neighboring properties and energy efficiency.
- Video surveillance coverage, protocol, and maintenance coordinated with local law enforcement.
- Regular fire alarm drills and lockdown drills to ensure faculty and staff can quickly determine if all students are accounted for.
- Ongoing training for staff provided to implement the Emergency Response Plan if needed.
- Educate students, faculty, and staff so they are empowered to report suspicious or concerning behavior.



## **Final Statement**

The ABRSD vision and core value statements will drive this building project. When the final design is selected, it will need to support 21st century teaching and learning, wellness, equity, and student engagement. If the building includes two unique elementary schools and an early childhood program, the design will need to balance the individual needs of each school program with the overall facility. Spaces should be designed so that instruction can evolve over time to ensure students are prepared to meet the challenges of the future. ABRSD is excited for all the possibilities that updated facilities can provide for student learning.