
Acushnet Public Schools

District News

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Message From The Superintendent

Inspiring the Next Generation of Citizens: Karen Bentley Honored with State Award

It is with great pride that I share wonderful news about one of our outstanding educators at Ford Middle School. **Eighth grade social studies teacher Karen Bentley** has been selected by the Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies (MCSS) to receive the Don Salvucci Award for Excellence in Promoting Civic Education.

This prestigious recognition honors educators who demonstrate exceptional commitment to helping students understand civic responsibility, government, and the importance of active

participation in a democratic society. Karen's nomination materials described a truly remarkable educator, and amid a very strong field of candidates across the Commonwealth, her dedication to students and her impact on civic learning stood out.

Karen's work exemplifies the kind of meaningful, engaging learning experiences we strive to provide for every student in Acushnet Public Schools. Through her teaching, students develop not only a strong understanding of history and government, but also the skills and confidence to become thoughtful, informed citizens. Her passion for civic education inspires students to ask questions, examine multiple perspectives, and understand the important role they can play in their communities.

Karen was formally recognized at the MCSS Awards Ceremony on March 13th at Old Sturbridge Village, following the MCSS Spring Conference. This recognition reflects not only Karen's exceptional work in the classroom, but also the strength of the Ford Middle School learning community.

On behalf of the entire Acushnet Public Schools community, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Karen Bentley for this well-deserved honor. We are grateful for her commitment to our students and proud to celebrate this recognition of her outstanding contributions to civic education.

Congratulations again to Ms. Bentley!

Dr. Paula J. Bailey
Superintendent
Acushnet Public Schools

#WildcatPride #TwoSchoolsONEDistrict #WildcatsAimingHigh





Student Services

Hello families!

I had the opportunity to attend the recent SEPAC meeting. We were discussing inclusivity and the importance of all students having access to the community for education, health, and recreation.

I want to share some of the resources that help bring families together, inform parents of community resources, and offer opportunities for students to share common interests.

We discussed a few of the organizations below and I think they are worth sharing. In addition, if you are interested in having a guest speaker from these organizations or any others that you find interesting then please let me know via an email or phone call. You are welcome to send me links to organizations that you think fellow parents would be interested in.

I hope you find these helpful and I welcome additional suggestions:

The **Department of Developmental Services** provides support for individuals with intellectual

and developmental disabilities including Autism Spectrum Disorder to enhance opportunities to become fully engaged members of their community.

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/departments-of-developmental-services>

Massability's services are designed to assist individuals with disabilities to make informed choices about work. Any individual with a disability can ask about getting services.

<https://www.mass.gov/locations/massability-new-bedford>

The **ARC** fosters community partnerships, promotes individual advocacy and creates a pathway for growth and innovation by offering exceptional support and services to people with all abilities.

<https://www.arcnbc.org>

Don't Forget Us...Pet Us is an all ability friendly leisure activity that strives to protect and advocate for animals in need. We rescue and provide sanctuary to farmed and domestic animals that are often sick, neglected, or discarded – giving them the second chance they deserve. We aim to inspire compassion for animals through education, adoption, and personal connections, in hopes of creating a kinder, more humane community and world.

<https://dontforgetuspetus.org>

This website was inspired by a family's never-ending quest for programs and services to help their now 28-year old Aspergers son. It lists events and resources for families with exceptional needs.

<https://spedchildmass.com>

Be Well!
Colleen Doyle
Director of Student Services

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

MCAS Testing

MCAS testing for students in grades 3–8 will take place during April and May. While MCAS is just one measure of student progress, it provides valuable information that helps us refine instruction and ensure we are meeting Massachusetts' high standards for learning.

We encourage families to review the [MCAS Resources for Parents/Guardians](#), especially the section on [Why Testing Matters](#). We also ask that you speak with your child about the importance of putting forth their best effort. Our educators use this data carefully to inform

instructional decisions, and student effort plays an important role in ensuring the information is accurate and meaningful.

Student Opportunity Act Plan Update

The 2019 Student Opportunity Act (SOA) increased Chapter 70 funding to support districts in meeting the needs of high-need student populations. As part of this work, all districts are required to set achievement gap targets and implement a three-year, evidence-based plan.

Acushnet Public Schools is currently in Year 2 of our 3-year plan, which focuses on a comprehensive approach to literacy:

- Implementing a strong early literacy program using high-quality instructional materials, including foundational skills
- Using reliable screening tools to identify students who need additional support and providing targeted, research-based interventions
- Delivering focused academic support for student groups experiencing the greatest achievement gaps

Early data this year show promising improvements in student outcomes, especially for students with disabilities, and signs that achievement gaps are beginning to narrow. We will continue building on this progress to ensure equitable outcomes for all learners.

Thank you to our dedicated educators and families for working together to support student success.

Congratulations to Ms. Karen Bentley!

We are proud to congratulate Ms. Karen Bentley, 8th grade Civics teacher, on being named the 2026 recipient of the Don Salvucci Award for Excellence in Promoting Civic Education.

When she was surprised with the news during class, her students immediately erupted in cheers, with several calling out, *"You deserve it!"*

Thank you, Ms. Bentley, for your passion and dedication to civic education and for making the 8th grade experience so meaningful for our students.

Strategic Planning Update

Thank you to the many families and staff members who completed our strategic planning survey. The Strategic Planning Committee reviewed the survey results on March 31, 2026, and is carefully considering the valuable feedback, ideas, and insights shared.

In response to a parent request, we are sharing the district's current [APS District Plan Overview 2021-2026](#), which includes our vision, mission, core values, and strategic objectives.

The committee, composed of educators and parents, is now working to develop an updated plan for the 2026–2031 school years.

Curriculum Information

Another request from the strategic planning survey was to re-share information about our curriculum. While this is shared annually, we understand how busy families are and are happy to provide it again here:

[APS Curriculum, Programs, and Assessments](#)

Grant Awards

Acushnet Public Schools is excited to announce the award of two new three-year grants that will expand applied learning opportunities across the district:

- **Project Lead The Way (PLTW)** – Ford Middle School has received a grant from the One8 Foundation to support teacher professional development and provide materials that enhance hands-on, STEM-focused learning experiences.
- **Investigating History** – Acushnet Elementary School has been awarded funding (also from the One8 Foundation) for grades 3 and 4 to support professional development and strengthen inquiry-based social studies instruction.

These grants represent an exciting investment in innovative teaching and learning for our students.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership in making Acushnet Public Schools a safe, engaging, and thriving learning community for all students.

Angela Ruggeri

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Technology

Spring is here, and so is MCAS!

Spring Tips!

1. **Recycle old technology:** Spring is a good time to dispose of old tech responsibly.
2. **Change your Passwords:** This is a good time to update your passwords to minimize the risk of unauthorized access..
3. **Phishing is becoming harder to spot:** Cybercriminals are now leveraging AI to craft highly convincing phishing emails, websites, voice and video messages, and texts. If

things look suspicious, take action. Do not respond directly to messages and make sure you contact the person or company directly before providing personal information.

4. **Update!:** Update your devices. This is a quick way to keep your device and information secure. These updates, as inconvenient as they can be, are there to secure your equipment and fix security vulnerabilities.

MCAS Chromebook Checks - important

If you notice your child has a damaged or non working Chromebook. Please contact techassistance@acushnetschools.us and we will get back to you as soon as possible! Each student will need a fully functioning device for this year's MCAS!

Parent Portal: Most of our parents have signed into their Aspen Portal account, however if you have not done so. Please go to our website www.acushnetschools.us and click on Parent Portal on the right of your screen. You will want to sign in with your login id (usually your email address) and the password that you used to sign up with. If you have forgotten your password. Click on the "trouble logging in" link. This portal will allow you to see your child's information and allow you to make changes to your personal information (phone numbers, email addresses / etc) more easily. If you have any problems, please contact techassistance@acushnetschools.us

Following these guidelines helps us be a safer community and we are stronger together!

Acushnet Technology Department

Business Office

Business

FY2027 Budget Process

We have been working diligently on the development of the Fiscal Year 2027 budget for Acushnet Public Schools. This work has focused on carefully assessing the needs of every student while following the state budget process to identify and maximize all available funding sources.

The process begins with a thorough review of the current budget, expenditures, and the district's needs in alignment with the District Plan. Meetings have been conducted with principals and department heads, followed by detailed discussions centered on student needs. Input from all departments and school leaders continues to be a critical component of this work and will be incorporated as the full School Committee begins its budget deliberations.

At this time, we are awaiting final information regarding our entitlement grants as well as any additional sources of funding that may become available. We also anticipate updates to the state budget in the coming weeks and remain hopeful that it will include an increase in Chapter 70 funding.

Over the next couple months, the School Committee will meet regularly to review and discuss the proposed budget, making adjustments as needed to develop the School Committee's Recommended Budget. They will also meet with the Board of Selectmen and the Town Finance Committee to discuss the needs of the schools. Once complete, the budget will be presented to the Town for consideration. The Town will then conduct its own review of all municipal budgets and make recommendations to achieve a balanced financial plan, which will ultimately be presented to voters in June.

Throughout the entire process, the Superintendent and School Committee remain fully engaged and steadfast in their commitment to advocate for the resources, materials, and support our teachers and students need to ensure the highest quality education possible.

Facilities

With winter now behind us, cleanup and repair efforts are underway to address the impact of this season's severe weather. Planned work includes restoring grass areas, repairing parking lots, sidewalks, and curbing, and conducting roof inspections for any snow and ice damage. In addition, preparations are in progress to ensure outdoor spaces are ready for student use, including playgrounds and athletic fields.

Looking ahead, our focus is on restoring and enhancing our facilities to support spring programming, outdoor learning opportunities, and end-of-year activities. The Facilities team remains committed to providing safe, functional, and welcoming environments for students, staff, and the community as we transition into the final months of the school year.

Use of Facilities

Are you or someone you know looking to use our facilities? If so, please utilize our [Facility/Rental Use](#) website page for further information. We look forward to working with you!

School Nutrition

SBP & NSLP

At APS we participate in the **School Breakfast Program** and the **National School Lunch Program**.

These programs are federally assisted meal programs that are administered at the federal level by the Food and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture. For fact sheets on these programs please see below!

- [The School Breakfast Program](#)
- [The National School Lunch Program](#)

For more information regarding APS' specific School Nutrition Program such as our menus, pre-payment options, nutrition education and more, please visit our [Acushnet Public Schools Food Service](#) website page.

MySchoolBucks

Curious as to what your children have been purchasing in our school cafeterias - visit [MySchoolBucks](#)! Under your student's name click "Meals" and then click "Purchase History".

Here you will be able to see if your student purchased a meal, a hot or cold "grab and go", doubles, etc.

Transportation

If it becomes necessary to permanently change a student's bus stop before the end of the year due to relocation, change in caregiving, or other family emergency, please email requests directly to schooltransportation@acushnetschools.us.

Thank you for your investment in our schools!

Aldo Petronio
Business Manager

Acushnet Public Schools



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