

School Committee Update

Following the meetings of October 2, 2012, and October 9, 2012.

Celebrating CPS and CCRSD

The video Celebrating Concord Public Schools (CPS) and the Concord-Carlisle Regional School District (CCRSD) was shown at the School Committee meeting and can be viewed on the district web site at www.concordpublicschools.net. The video was developed by Kathy Codianne, CPS/CCRSD Director of Teaching and Learning, and Stacie Green, of 64 Crayons and Moving Media. The video features students and teachers at CPS and CCRSD discussing their teaching and learning environments and particular projects that expanded student learning.

Concord-Carlisle High School (CCHS) ranked #4 in Boston Magazine's Best Schools 2012. Rankings were based on academics (MCAS scores, SAT scores, number of AP classes and scores), graduation rates, student-teacher ratio, per-pupil spending, and extracurricular activities (number of sports and clubs). More information can be found at www.bostonmagazine.com/articles/2012/08/boston-best-schools-2012/

Ms. Codianne, Kelly Clough, Thoreau Principal, Thoreau 5th grade teachers, Karen Hoyt and Susan Erickson, and Technology Specialist Sue Howard gave a presentation about the techniques they are using to create a "flipped" classroom in which students are actively involved and take ownership of their learning. Students presented projects and described how they became experts and mentored other students. Gene Warfel, Director of Information Technology and the K-12 technology specialists discussed the work they do to support and enhance student learning using technological tools and applications. The new Massachusetts Common Core Standards require that technology be embedded in the curriculum. The teachers and specialists expressed appreciation to the Superintendent, Principals, and the District for providing professional development opportunities that enabled them to learn about and try cutting edge teaching methods and subsequently to mentor other teachers.

Enrollment

Student enrollment has significantly increased this year with an additional 145 students in grades K-8 and an additional 7 students at CCHS. As of October 1, 2012, CPS enrollment is 2102 students and CCHS enrollment is 1216 students. School enrollment on October 1 sets the standard for Chapter 70 funding from the State. Staffing was increased at Alcott, Thoreau, and CMS to meet the needs of the increased enrollment. We are expecting more students as the Concord Mews development is filled. The School Committees will be forming a sub-committee to study student enrollment.

School Budgets

John Flaherty, Deputy Superintendent of Finance and Operations, presented the preliminary budgets for 2013-2014 (FY14). The goal of the School Committees and the school administration is to develop budgets that preserve school programs but are respectful of the taxpayers of Concord and Carlisle. The CPS budget contains an increase of 4.9% for a total of \$31,223,381. Main factors driving the increase are: salaries, transportation costs, special education tuitions, and enrollment-driven staffing increases. The CCRSD operating budget increase is 2.64% for a total of 24,271,987. Major factors are: salaries, OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits), technology, transportation costs, retirement, legal fees, and other escalations. The regional district has seen reductions in the cost of special education tuitions, natural gas, and insurance. There is a shift in the Concord : Carlisle assessment ratio from 71.77% : 28.23% to 72.85% : 27.15%, which represents an increase of approximately \$230, 542 to Concord.

2012 MCAS Report

Ms. Codianne presented the results of the 2012 MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) exams taken by all students in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10. She compared grade level performance, cohort performance, and the progress and performance index. Detailed results are available on the district web site as attachments to the October 2 meeting. CPS and CCHS students performed well: in grade 5, 85% Advanced/Proficient (A/P) in English language arts (ELA), 87% A/P in math, 82% A/P in science; in grade 8, 99% A/P in ELA, 80% A/P in math, 82% A/P in science; in grade 10, 98% A/P in ELA, 92% A/P in math, 95% A/P in science. Students showed improvement by cohort for both regular education and high needs students, however, additional intervention is planned for some students. At CCHS, 100% of in-district students received a competency determination, 243 out of 300 students qualified for a Koplik Certificate of Mastery, and 97 students qualified for an Adams Scholarship, which grants a tuition waiver to any Massachusetts public college.

TELL Mass Survey

In March/April 2012, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) conducted a survey on teaching conditions, the TELL (Teaching, Empowering, Leading & Learning) Mass Survey, which was required by all Race To The Top (RTTT) states. The survey assessed teaching and learning conditions, including time for planning, facilities and resources, student conduct, community support, school and teacher leadership, professional development, and instructional support. The purpose of the survey was “to collect perceptual data on the working conditions and school climate and culture in order to promote collaborative discussions between educators and school leadership within schools and districts” (TELL Mass Survey Institute). Although the results were originally scheduled to be presented at a Joint School Committee meeting in May, the results were embargoed until July by Mitchell Chester, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. More information about the survey is available at www.tellmass.org and on the district web site as attachments to the October 2 meeting.

The teachers unions, Concord Teachers’ Association (CTA) and the Concord-Carlisle Teacher’s Association (CCTA), requested that the TELL Mass information be presented at the School Committee meeting on October 2, 2012 instead of over the summer when the DESE embargo was lifted. Superintendent Diana Rigby presented an overview of the survey and the results, comparing the average results for CPS and CCRSD with the average results in Massachusetts. In many areas, district teachers rated their teaching environment lower than the Massachusetts average. The presidents of the CTA and CCTA each responded with a statement expressing their concern about the survey results. In all school buildings, leadership teams and teachers will be meeting to review the data, assess specific conditions, implement improvements, and monitor results. School Committee members Fabian Fondriest and Jennifer Munn will be serving on a labor-management committee with the CTA to review specific items from the K-8 survey.

Student Transportation

Ms. Spada updated the Committees on the work of the School Committee-appointed Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), which is studying long-term options for student transportation. The TAC has focused on the identification of potential transportation facility sites and has developed a matrix for the consideration of potential properties. The TAC is developing timelines, cost estimates, and sources of funding for several different options to allow the School Committees to assess comparative costs and benefits. The TAC will present a final report at the October 23 School

Committee meeting. For short-term student transportation needs, the SC approved the lease of a parking facility in Acton for 2012-13 with an option to renew for two successor one-year contracts.

CCHS Building Project

The Regional School Committee continues to monitor the progress of the CCHS building project. The CCHS Building Committee has submitted the documentation requested by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) in order to restore reimbursement eligibility of the project. Concerns about the scope of the project, the project budget, and the location of the alternate gym have been addressed in the submittal. The permitting package has been approved by the Concord Planning Department. The Building Committee investigated several options to change the current site design to accommodate the existing bus facility. The cost to implement changes ranged from \$2,174,424 to \$4,171,115 estimated funding impact and would result in significant delays for the project. The Building Committee voted unanimously not to recommend alteration of the site design. More information is available at www.cchsbuilding.org.

Other Business/Reports

Glenn Koocher, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC), reviewed the roles and responsibilities of School Committee members. The main responsibilities of the School Committee are to set policy and to determine the school budget. In addition, the School Committee hires the Superintendent, who manages the school district. He emphasized that School Committees should focus on student achievement and how to achieve positive outcomes for students. School Committees should promote the best interests of students through budgets and collective bargaining. Mr. Koocher also addressed the challenges of communication with members of the community, maintaining civil discourse during school committee meetings, and confidentiality.

The Committee held the first reading to update 12 district policies to comply with the Gender Identity Anti-Discrimination Statute, Michael's Law (emergency response), and Executive Session, as recommended by the MASC. The Committee also approved the Maintenance Employee Contract and approved several field trips for CCHS students.

Ms. Rigby advised the School Committees that the district has hired an experienced and well-recognized educational consultant recommended by Research for Better Teaching (RBT, www.rbteach.com) to perform the external evaluation at Thoreau School. The evaluator will assess decision-making processes, collaborative processes and adult interaction at Thoreau School. She will gather information from all stakeholders and a report will be presented to the Concord School Committee and the Thoreau community in the winter of 2013.

For more information, please go to the School Committee page on the district web site, www.concordpublicschools.net/school-committee.