

The School Committees Report

The School Committees and Superintendent are dedicated to achieving their educational goals while maintaining a transparent public process related to policy decisions. This article is one in a series that is intended to update and inform the residents of Concord and Carlisle about the districts' on-going activities, initiatives and policies.

Concord-Carlisle School Committee Approves Project Funding Agreement for High School Building Project

The members of the Regional School Committee voted to approve the final Project Funding Agreement (PFA) with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) at the August 26th meeting. This is an important milestone for the project and this action was recommended by a unanimous vote of the CCHS Building Committee.

The PFA serves as the formal agreement between the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) and the regional school district. The contract creates a mechanism for the project to secure the state's financial contribution and outlines policies regarding the types and levels of state reimbursement for project elements. An initial PFA was executed in February of 2012 based on projected costs that has allowed the project to secure \$20 million in state reimbursements to date.

The Regional School Committee receives regular updates on the high school building project at every meeting and has a representative serve on CCHS Building Committee. During the spring and summer, there were two joint meetings of the School and Building Committees to share information and to ensure coordination between the two entities.

School Committee Goal Setting: Communications

The School Committees scheduled time at their August 26th meeting to set goals and to review their meeting procedures and practices. One of the goals that was discussed was communication with the citizens of Concord and Carlisle.

Last August, the School Committees and Superintendent established a goal to improve communication. This led to a number of communication initiatives, which were implemented during the 2013-2014 academic year. These initiatives provided more opportunities for dialogue between residents and members of the School Committee. The six "School Committee Coffees," were a key element of the communications program. These sessions, which were held at different school sites, allowed citizens and committee members to have informal discussions about topics raised during normal school committee business meetings. In addition to the coffee sessions, members of the School Committees met regularly with administrators and teachers.

Other elements of the communication plan included improving digital access to the School Committee, Superintendent, and information related to school policies and practices. These improvements included updating the school committee web site, adding the "your voice matters" tool to the district web site which gives residents direct access to the Superintendent, adjusting the school committee email access, and creating a twitter account for the Superintendent.

In addition to those actions, a part-time communication manager was hired and the School Committees submitted regular informational updates to the local media, including the Concord Journal.

In discussing the elements and performance of the communications program, members of the Committee felt that these improvements were working well and cited both the recent agreement on the school calendar with the teachers union and the smooth nature of the budget process as evidence. The Committee also agreed to strive for continuing improvements in communication with all stakeholders.

The School Committees Contact Information

The School Committees and Superintendent are committed to on-going public dialogue and to ensuring that residents of Carlisle and Concord are informed. School Committee meetings are open to the public and the public is encouraged to attend. The meetings are broadcast on CCTV and are available on demand at www.concordtv.org. The district web site (www.concordpublicschools.net) contains updated information on meetings and interested individuals can contact the Concord School Committee via email at concordschoolcommittee@colonial.net and the Concord-Carlisle Regional School Committee at concordcarliseschoolcommittee@colonial.net or the Your Voice link on the District's home page at www.concordpublicschools.net.