

## **Concord School Committee 2014 Annual Report**

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The Concord Public Schools continue to enjoy strong support from Concord citizens, which allows the provision of a high quality education to every child in our community. The importance placed by the Concord community on education means that our schools can maintain high achievement levels, hire and support excellent teachers, introduce new curriculum and technology, and provide a safe and healthy environment for our students.

In 2014, we welcomed new School Committee member, Wallace Johnston. We recognized retiring member, Pamela Gannon for six years of service.

### **Mission and Core Values**

The School Committee uses the vision provided by the district's mission statement and core values to guide our decisions. The mission of the Concord Public Schools and the Concord-Carlisle Regional School District is to educate all students to become independent lifelong learners, creative thinkers, caring citizens, and responsible contributors to our increasingly diverse global society. The core values are: academic excellence, empathic and respectful community, professional collaboration, educational equity, and continuous improvement. In addition, the School Committee and administration set annual goals for student achievement and instruction, learning environment, professional collaboration, communication and community engagement, and infrastructure and operations.

### **Enrollment**

Concord Public Schools (CPS) serves 2093 students in grades K-8 and an additional 53 students in the integrated preschool program. CPS experienced a slight reduction in enrollment (-59) in 2014. This followed a significant enrollment increase (+145) in 2012 and another increase in 2013 (+50). Over the past five years, the enrollment has increased by 12.5% with an additional 234 students in grades K-8. Student enrollment is projected to increase for the next five years by 6%. The Superintendent and School Committee are carefully monitoring enrollment. The proposed FY2016 budget includes additional staff and an administrator to address enrollment and increased regulatory and administrative requirements. Additionally, the schools have recommended funding to support replenishment of supplies and materials that have not kept pace with enrollment increases.

### **Student Achievement and Activities**

The school administration and School Committee focus on improving student learning. Teachers and administrators work hard to ensure an appropriate educational experience and learning environment for each student. The district uses a variety of assessments to monitor student progress, and details of student learning and achievement are provided in the Superintendent's Report. The district continues efforts to integrate technology into the daily curriculum as one of many tools that enhance teaching and learning, with teachers exploring new strategies and serving as mentors to each other. The School Committee supports these efforts by providing resources through the school budget.

In 2014, the School Committee received updates on many school initiatives and enjoyed joint student-teacher presentations on “K Students Use iPads to Increase Their Learning,” “Grade 5 Save Our Sharks – STEAM Project,” “Grade 4 Geocaching,” “CMS 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Environment,” “Thoreau Times Electronic News,” and “K-8 Art Initiatives.” The level of student engagement in the learning process, the appropriate use of available tools to enhance teaching and learning, and the interdisciplinary aspect of learning activities impressed the School Committee.

We are extremely fortunate to have robust music and arts programs in our schools. All students receive music and art instruction, and most students participate in supplemental music programs for orchestra, band, and chorus that are offered from 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades. Activities beyond the school day extend the learning experience for students in a multitude of areas to include enhancements to academic studies, athletics, the arts, technology, games and student interest groups. Outside organizations such as the Concord Education Fund and the Parent Teacher Groups (PTGs) fund many of these activities. We are grateful to the teachers, parents and citizens who facilitate and support these opportunities for students.

### **Superintendent Evaluation and Contract**

In 2011, the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) adopted new regulations for the evaluation of Massachusetts’ educators, and an implementation guide was released in 2012. The School Committee completed the second year of this new procedure for the 2014 Superintendent Evaluation. The Superintendent began the first year of a new three-year contract on July 1, 2014.

### **School Budget**

The goal of the School Committee is to develop budgets that meet the needs of our students and are sensitive to the impact on taxpayers. The School Committee, school administration, and Finance Committee meet every year in October and November to discuss funding priorities and cost drivers. The proposed FY16 CPS operating budget of \$34.5 million represents a 6.48% increase for a 5-year average increase of 3.92%.

Major cost drivers for the CPS budget increase include teacher salaries, curriculum materials restoration for increased enrollment, staffing to address new education regulations and requirements, support of increasing enrollment in the integrated preschool, special education costs, and transportation costs. Salaries for faculty and staff comprise 57.3% of the proposed CPS budget increase and 79.2% of the total proposed FY16 operating budget.

The proposed FY16 budget does reflect a higher annual increase than in the past five years. This increase includes funding to restore curriculum materials and supplies, and staffing to address enrollment increases and regulatory education requirements. Over the past five years, funding of materials and supplies has not kept up with the increases in enrollment due to very tight budgets. The School Committee fully supports and strongly recommends the increased funds this year to maintain the educational excellence of our schools. For the 9<sup>th</sup> year in a row, the recommended budget does not require a Proposition 2½ override.

### **Long Term Transportation**

The School Committee has devoted extensive hours to identifying a viable location to park and maintain the districts’ school buses in order to maintain an in-District School Transportation operation. While waiting for the development of a long-term transportation facility in Concord, the School Committee has continued to explore options for the most efficient and economical temporary solution. The School Committee was successful in entering a lease agreement in

Acton for temporary parking, maintenance and fueling at one location until the permanent facility in Concord is operational.

The Town of Concord purchased the property at 37 Knox Trail in Acton as an access to the WR Grace land - the anticipated future site of a long-term school transportation facility. Additionally, 37 Knox Trail offers space to house the school transportation administration offices. Once the Town acquires the WR Grace land, plans will commence to develop this property for Town and School use.

### **Communication and Community Engagement**

The School Committee adopted a goal to continue efforts to improve communication with stakeholders. The Committee has held several School Committee - Community Coffees as forums, beyond their regular business meetings, where members of the public can comment and ask questions of School Committee members. The Committee plans to continue this initiative in 2015. In addition, the Committee is submitting regular articles to the Concord Journal to update citizens about School Committee news and has made improvements to the School Committee Web Page. School Committee meetings are open to the public and agendas and attachments are posted on the district web site ([www.concordpublicschools.net](http://www.concordpublicschools.net)). The meetings are broadcast on CCTV and are available on demand at [www.concordtv.org](http://www.concordtv.org).

### **Appreciation**

The School Committee is grateful to have exemplary school leadership and an exceptional faculty and staff, who make Concord Public Schools among the top districts in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We appreciate all the parents and community members who volunteer their time on behalf of our schools. Most of all, we thank the citizens of Concord for their ongoing support of our schools.