

Annual Town Report 2015
Concord Public Schools
Concord-Carlisle Regional School District
Superintendent's Report

Diana F. Rigby, Superintendent
John Flaherty, Deputy Supt. of Finance and Operations
Kristen Herbert, Director of Teaching and Learning
Kelly McCausland, Director of Human Resources
Jessica Murphy, Director of Special Education
Peter Kelly, Director of Information Technology
Peter Badalament, Concord-Carlisle Principal
Lynne Beattie, Concord Middle School Principal
Sharon Young, Alcott Principal
Angel Charles, Thoreau Principal
Pat Fernandes, Willard Principal

The mission of the Concord Public Schools and the Concord-Carlisle Regional School District is to educate all students to become lifelong learners, creative thinkers, caring citizens, and responsible contributors in our diverse global society. We are able to achieve our mission through the investment of educators, staff, parents, and community members who work tirelessly to improve our schools.

DISTRICT GOALS

Every school year, the administration develops district goals for the Concord Public Schools (CPS) and the Concord-Carlisle Regional School District (CCRS) which are approved by the School Committees. We focus on efforts to improve student learning by providing students with a rigorous and coherent curriculum and high quality instruction, monitoring student progress through common assessments, identifying appropriate interventions, adjusting instructional practices, and closing the achievement gap. The goals also specify improvements in authentic learning experiences, instructional strategies, analyzing student data, integrating digital tools, teacher collaboration and evaluation, and community support. In addition, we strive for prudent management of school budgets, resources, capital projects, the new high school building project and resolution of fair collective bargaining contracts.

STUDENT LEARNING

All district efforts focus on improving student learning and teaching. Elementary (grades K-5) principals, curriculum specialists, and teachers worked together to monitor individual student progress in reading, writing, and math. At each school site, the assessment data was analyzed in grade level progress meetings, and classroom instruction or Response to Intervention (RtI) instructional groups were adjusted to provide targeted skill instruction for struggling students. Teachers continued to implement district wide grade level writing rubrics to analyze student writing pieces with a greater emphasis on students' ability to work with informational texts and to write persuasive and informational pieces. More than 80% of the K5 students mastered end of the year grade level standards in English Language Arts. The elementary schools are in the second year of an adoption process to choose a new math curriculum that is aligned to the Common Core State Standards. The K12 science committee is also in the second year of selecting science curriculum that is aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards.

At Concord Middle School (CMS), 80% of the students earned report grades B- or higher across academic subjects: English, math, foreign language, science, and social studies. Common assessments were identified and administered in every subject. English teachers worked collaboratively to refine curriculum to align with not only the Massachusetts Common Core standards but also with rigorous performance based assessments as students will see on the PARCC in spring 2016 and MCAS 2.0 beginning in 2017. Examples from practice include explicit teaching of tier 2 vocabulary as well as revising questions posed to students focused on

higher order thinking skills identified on Bloom's Taxonomy. Developmental Language Arts classes continued to provide additional academic support in English. All teachers of this course were trained in and are implementing a specific reading intervention program, *Levelled Literacy Intervention*. Math teachers promoted increased achievement in leveled classes and through additional intervention with those students enrolled in the Math Strategies course. Math Strategies enrollment has increased due to the revision of the daily schedule to include a supplemental block, enabling students to participate in a full core curriculum program while enrolled in Math Strategies as needed. All math teachers were trained in *Study Island*, a math intervention program, that is implemented in Math Strategies.

October began the fifth year of *CMS Stands Together* bullying prevention and intervention curriculum for the entire CMS community. Students participated in five lessons from October through November. Curriculum was revised last year to include an expanded focus on racial and cultural issues at CMS. The English department expanded the "One School, One Book" summer reading assignment with all staff and students reading critically acclaimed "Cat On The Wall".

At Concord-Carlisle High School (CCHS) 90% of the students earned more than 2.5 GPA, and 100% of the graduating class achieved Competency Determination. Every department worked on developing and implementing common assessments to monitor student progress in the core curriculum and the Common Core Standards. *AP Capstone Research*, a second course of a new program offered by the College Board, was implemented this year, and *Rivers and Revolutions*, a unique interdisciplinary program, completed its third successful year with 100 enthusiastic students. *Digital Filmmaking* and *Biostatistics* are also new courses that are engaging students through the application of knowledge in unique ways

At the beginning of the school year, CCHS launched a successful 1:1 student laptop program and every student now has an Apple laptop computer for use in the classroom and at home. In preparation for this transition to 1:1, CCHS teachers participated in district-based technology workshops on creative ways to use the laptops as effective learning tools. Teachers integrate Google Docs and Google Applications for Education to provide students with more opportunities to collaborate and to provide formative assessment on student work. Students use a variety of digital tools and Google Apps to access online course work, check email for class and school information, contribute to online forum discussions, and work with a variety of web-based platforms. Information literacy classes taught by the library media specialist instructed all students in advanced web searches, source evaluation, citation, and web-based tools for collaborating, synthesizing, and sharing work. Twenty-five students participated in Virtual High School classes each semester. Thirty Biology students participated in the Environmental Field Studies project to protect Blandings' turtles. The Robotics team built an amazing robot to successfully compete at the regional competitions at WPI and Northeastern University. The CCHS Meteorology students and teacher presented at the American Meteorological Society conference in Phoenix, Arizona.

One hundred and forty (140) students of color in grades K-12 who reside in Boston attend the Concord Public Schools and the Concord-Carlisle Regional School District via METCO. Our METCO Program is the sixth largest in Massachusetts. CPS provides a comprehensive orientation process for families of students entering Kindergarten, concluding with a four-week summer readiness program at Alcott School to prepare students for the transition to Kindergarten. CPS also maintains a robust Family Friends Program and a strong relationship with Concord Recreation to provide enrichment opportunities for METCO students in grades K-8. In Kindergarten and 1st grade, CPS and The Umbrella Center for the Arts partner to provide a weekly arts enrichment course for our METCO students, with a focus on early literacy. CMS programming includes an initiative to increase METCO student achievement. Led by an English and Math teacher and supported by tutors in each building, the program aims to provide each student with an individualized learning experience. All students set SMART goals for math, English and community involvement, and they are working with their teachers to monitor their progress. Prior to the beginning of school, CMS runs a summer workshop for rising 6th

grade METCO students. The workshop focuses on building students' organization, time management, and self-advocacy skills while also developing a stronger connection to Concord through field experience at the Old North Bridge, Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, and the Robbins House Interpretive Center. Students complete a capstone project at the close of the workshop utilizing video technology. The CCHS faculty continues to address the achievement gap with a combination of academic and social programming. All 9th and 10th grade METCO students are enrolled in Achievement Strategies, a course implemented to provide direct instruction on executive functioning skills. This past summer, CCHS math teachers developed a summer math program, "Algebridge" for incoming Boston students to increase their participation in higher-level math courses. CCHS teachers also serve as mentors in POWER (Positive Opportunities with Engaging Relationships), a student leadership initiative in which each METCO freshman is matched with an upperclassmen and a teacher, forming a triad. CCHS has also strengthened its Family Friends Program so that each student is matched with a cooperating family. CCHS continued its implementation of the Anti-Defamation League's World of Difference Institute, an anti-bias program designed to prepare students for competence in a multicultural society, with 50 new students completing training to act as peer leaders in Advisory.

The summer school offerings were increased in summer 2015 to include a "Math Academy" for METCO students in grades 3-8. More than 200 students participated in summer learning in reading, math, special education, or English as a Second Language during the four weeks in July.

At the district level, administrators, principals, department chairs, and K5 curriculum specialists attended training in Rubicon ATLAS, the software used to map the district K12 curriculum. This online platform supports a systematic approach to high quality curriculum across both districts.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

CCHS and CPS students continue to achieve at high levels both in state and district assessments. Students in grades 5, 8, and 10 continued to take the MCAS in science and scored consistently high. Ninety-seven percent (98%) of 10th grade students scored proficient or advanced on the ELA MCAS and 94% percent scored proficient or advanced on the Math MCAS. Ninety-six percent (96%) of 10th grade students passed one of the Science MCAS. One hundred percent (100%) of the CCHS class of 2015 received a Competency Determination as a result of passing both the ELA and Math MCAS. For students in grades 3 - 8, CPS participated in a pilot of the PARCC online assessment of reading and math. This is a more rigorous assessment than MCAS and Concord students still continue to score at high levels (grade 5 ELA - 91% met or exceeded expectations, grade 5 math - 87% met or exceeded expectations, grade 8 ELA - 78% met or exceeded expectations, and grade 8 math - 75% met or exceeded expectations.) These scores were so high that both Alcott and Thoreau Schools received the highest accountability rating, Level 1.

The median SAT score for CCHS Class 2015 was 1800 (with 1552 as the State average). Six students in the Class of 2015 qualified as National Merit Scholar Finalists, and 26 students received Letters of Commendation. 97% of Advanced Placement (AP) exams taken by CCHS students received a passing score, and overall 83% of AP exams were scored at a 4 or 5 (the highest score). The average number of CCHS graduates planning to continue their education in post-secondary placements exceeded 95%. In a survey of graduating seniors, 86% reported they were admitted to their 1st or 2nd college choice.

Overall, 94.5% of CCHS students participated in a club, group, or athletic team at CCHS. The CCHS Repertory and Concert Bands earned gold medals at the prestigious Massachusetts Instrumental and Choral Conductors Association (MICCA) State Concert Festival. A record number of student musicians (band, orchestra, jazz band, and chorus) were nominated and accepted into the MENC All-eastern Honors Ensembles and sixteen (16) students received All-State recommendations. Student artists participated in the Boston Globe Scholastic Art awards regional exhibit and earned gold and silver keys. Student artists also participated locally in the

Lexington Arts and Crafts Society Show for art majors and the year-end awards and retrospective at the Concord Art Association. In the fall of 2014, more than 30 students performed on stage and were involved as technical crew for Shakespeare's *A Winter's Tale*. More than 50 students worked together to build sets, coordinate lighting and sound for the production, and performed in a unique contemporary production, *The Veil*, and the cast went on to perform this show at the Massachusetts Educational Theater Guild festival. In the spring of 2015, the Drama program opened the new auditorium with a spectacular performance of *Chicago* with more than 150 students performing as actors or musicians, creating technical designs, building sets, implementing lighting and sound, and serving as stage crew. The CCHS Student Senate sponsored a freshmen orientation program that brought all of the incoming ninth grade students together for an informative and fun-filled day before the beginning of school. The Senate worked on many projects focused on student life: managing student stress, enhancing communication among all members of the school community, and increasing sustainability initiatives. Faculty and students collaborated with residents of Concord, Carlisle, and Boston to promote complementary community programming, including the Healthy Concord initiative, which led to the development of mindfulness oriented programming at CCHS in all junior Advisories and at Faculty meetings as well. The CCHS Wellness Committee developed engaging programming for Mental Health Awareness Week and Health Week. CC Community Connection (CCCC) provided an internship-like experience for 25 students who worked with area residents/professionals.

CMS takes pride in stretching learning experiences beyond the breadth of the school day and across content areas to promote development of creative and critical thinking. Students competed in regional Rubik's Cube, Math Counts and Math Team contests, Lego Robotics and Science Olympiad, and the Model UN conference as well as National French and Spanish exams. Over 100 students participated as cast or crew in the musical, *The Wiz*, and choral and instrumental music students competed and performed in Junior Districts, MICCA and Music in the Parks.

In the elementary schools, Grade 5 students participated in the national Mathematical Olympiad program, and all school teams were named to the National Math Olympiad Honor Roll for scoring in the 90th percentile or higher. Fourth grade students at all schools participated in a special yearlong science project nurturing the development of Blandings' Turtles in the classrooms. They worked with a local ecologist to collect and contribute data as part of an ecological research project. Elementary students in all the schools participated in Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) projects such as the BeeBot robots at Willard, sea turtles at Thoreau, and moving paper sculptures at Alcott. Highlights in fourth grade include the annual Chinese poetry and calligraphy project with a poet in residence and the immigration unit. Third graders enjoyed a variety of research projects including their study of Native Americans. Thoreau published *Thoreau Times* with students assuming the responsibilities of reporters, photographers, graphic designers, cartoonists, book critics, and advertisers. Willard published *Willard Student Monthly For Kids* with students assuming all aspects of the newspaper production. Alcott students created crafts for the Grade 5 Annual Holiday fair and sold their homemade items for fundraising. Elementary students also participated in many musical events with chorus, string, band, and theater performances throughout the year. The elementary school orchestra earned bronze and gold medals at 2015 MICCA festival.

Elementary students engaged in a variety of community building and outreach efforts through the year including Grade 5 Service Day, Grade 5 Holiday Craft Day, Trick or Treat for UNICEF, From the Pumpkin Patch, Honoring our Veterans, Coats for Kids, Open Table, Concord Rec. Dept., Minuteman ARC, Emerson Hospital, Read to Feed, These Come from Trees, hosting visitors from Japan, and collaborating with CCHS student partners in the Rivers and Revolutions program.

CMS students developed cultural and community awareness and responsibility through involvement in a variety of leadership opportunities as members of Student Leaders and *CMS Stands Together*. Awareness was raised for local organizations through the Coats for Kids drive, fundraising walk for Children's Hospital, and the Animals and Planet club's second annual Pet

Palooza, a fundraising pet show. In September, Student Leaders created a community quilt to highlight this year's CMS Stands Together bullying prevention program.

At CCHS, students demonstrated their commitment to social responsibility through participation in numerous outreach activities, raising funds to aid relief efforts in numerous countries, and participating in the Ecuador, Denmark, Japan, France and Turkmenistan exchanges. Faculty and students from the "F Block Group", met more than a dozen times during lunch periods for discussion of racial issues across the country. Subsequently, student-led assemblies were implemented on race and bias in response to Ferguson event. Locally, our students completed more than 25,000 hours of service in the surrounding communities during the 2014-15 school year.

These activities and achievements are only a sampling of the wide range of student programs and projects at Alcott, Thoreau, Willard, CMS, and CCHS. For more information, visit the district website (www.concordpublicschools.net) or individual school websites.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

The Special Education Department of Concord Public Schools and the Concord-Carlisle Regional School District is dedicated to providing quality services and programs for students with disabilities preschool through age 22. We continue to strive to meet the increasingly diverse needs of students with learning, medical, cognitive and social disabilities within their local communities, providing opportunities both in and out of school to increase independence. As transition planning for students begins at age 14, we hired a full time transition specialist for CCHS in September 2015 to improve the transition services for special education students, ages 14-22. The Concord Integrated Preschool continues to meet the needs of our earliest learners. Beginning at age three, students with disabilities are learning with community peers in all three of our classrooms. We continue to work with Early Intervention and local daycares and preschools to identify students who may be eligible for special education and require services. At the Elementary level, the special education teachers are working with their grade level colleagues to examine and analyze data to improve student progress. Additionally, elementary special education teachers continue to participate in the Math program pilot and the district wide technology committee. At CMS, special education students use their laptops and specialized software to increase their learning and independence. At CCHS, the special education department worked diligently to prepare for the NEASC accreditation team's onsite visit. The programs and services for students with disabilities at CCHS are individually designed to meet each students' needs. The special education students are using the 1:1 laptops effectively and efficiently to be as independent in the classroom as possible.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The district continued to invest considerable resources in professional development, providing educators with learning opportunities in curriculum development and technology integration. During the summer, K12 teachers participated in eighty (80) curriculum development projects ranging from using iPads to create books in primary classrooms, K5 common research process, K5 digital writing projects, to Mindfulness in Schools, and CCHS departmental projects for transitioning to 1:1 learning environments. PreK-12 Teachers took courses in content areas , Open Circle, English Language Learners, and special education. Teachers participated in committee work on elementary math, K12 science, and K12 STEAM education.

HUMAN RESOURCES

In 2015 fifteen (15) administrators, faculty, and staff members retired after many years of dedicated service. The districts hired three (3) administrators, twenty-six (26) teachers at CCHS & CPS, and forty-seven (47) support staff members including bus drivers, food service employees, tutors, custodians, & assistants. The majority of the new hires filled vacancies created by retirements, resignations, and temporary leaves of absences. Retention rates for educators continue to remain strong. The CCHS retention rate in 2015 for educators was 97%

with an eight year average of 97.7%. The CPS retention rate in 2015 for educators was 97.6% with an eight year average of 96.5%. The districts have significant mentoring programs to ensure that new educators swiftly and substantively become part of the learning communities at each school site. The human resources office continued supporting improvement in implementation of the new comprehensive supervision & evaluation system for educators including evaluators. The Teachers Associations and administration continued to meet regularly to discuss ideas, issues, and concerns. Other activities include ongoing efforts to align professional development offerings with educator plans and goals, school improvement goals, and district goals; utilizing survey feedback regarding the district's new educator orientation; implementing mindfulness training opportunities for staff; and utilizing the Minuteman-Nashoba Health Group's Wellness Coordinator to initiate district-wide wellness activities. Contract negotiations continue with the Concord Teachers Association.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Following this year's successful completion of the new high school project, the IT department started network upgrades to meet the districts 21st century educational vision. To manage the increased number of devices on our network we are taking a multipronged approach. Both CCHS and CMS are 1:1 laptop learning environments, and the K5 schools are 2:1 laptops or iPads learning environments. We are installing Airwatch, a mobile device management platform (MDM), on all devices that need to access our network. The fundamental role of Airwatch is to enforce the districts network policies. It provides the ability to manage security needs while being sensitive to an end user's privacy expectations. Working with EMC, we are transitioning to a virtual environment using VMWare. Moving our core servers to a virtual environment provides an increase in efficiency, agility, and will reduce overall IT expenses going forward. The design of this new network structure features a DR server (Disaster Recovery) at the high school which can take over should the core servers at Ripley be unavailable. Going forward we are upgrading our firewall, segmenting Internet bandwidth by school, and rerouting network traffic between our buildings to increase efficiency. We continue a path to set up wireless network security while providing an Internet-only guest wireless network. We have successfully transitioned our email from FirstClass to Gmail. This included migrating existing FirstClass email accounts and Google drive data. K12 school sites will continue to expand their use of Google's education platform which includes the use of drive, apps, and classroom. The district's development and redesign of school based and teacher websites are well underway. The project's first phase included the launch of the district and high school web sites, both of which are now online. The second phase of the project includes PreK through middle school web sites and should launch early in 2016.

FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

The districts continue to maintain excellent academic programs while meeting challenging funding goals. Our core budgeting principles remain focused on using resources to support student learning and growth. The district goals approved by the school committees provided direction to the budget process to support student learning opportunities. The district administration and school committees' work continue to reflect on final completion and closeout of the new \$92.5M high school project. We continue to work collaboratively with the finance committees and have developed responsible FY2017 budgets during 2015 and we have successfully matched FINCOM's Regional and CPS guidelines. The FY2016 CPS school budget at \$34,542,735 represented a 6.48% increase above the FY2015 appropriation, and the FY 2016 operating budget for CCHS, \$25,802,829, increased by 4.87%. Both the CPS and CCHS FY2016 budget requests were within levy limits and for the ninth consecutive year did not require overrides. Both school districts managed successful FY2015 year-end closings. The Regional School District met its planned \$489,691 commitment towards its OPEB liability in the year-end closing process. CCRSD's Excess and Deficiency (E&D) fund balance for the past fiscal year has been maintained above the 4.8% level. The AAA bond rating has been maintained and the February 2015 \$30,000,000 Bond sale was assigned the highest possible rating by Moody's Investors Service on the borrowed funds at an effective interest rate of 2.87%.

CAPITAL PROJECTS AND TRANSPORTATION

The major capital projects for CPS included installation of high efficiency boilers at the Sanborn and revitalization of the Thoreau fields. For CCHS, the new high school project is essentially complete, with exception of fall hazard planting scheduled for the spring of 2016. The project remains within budget, scope, and student occupancy began in April of 2015. The construction of a bus depot support facility required for in house transportation at the W.R. Grace site in Concord is approaching the bidding phase with an anticipated completion date of January 2017; transportation administration will be housed at 37 Knox Trail, Acton.

SUMMARY

The major highlights of 2015 are the outstanding student achievement and the completion of the extraordinary high school building project. We are extremely proud of our students, faculties, and staff, and we are grateful for the Concord and Carlisle communities' support. The schools made significant progress in achieving the district goals by increasing student learning, improving curriculum and instruction, integrating technology into the classrooms, supporting faculty and staff, increasing teacher collaboration, developing responsive and responsible budgets, and building a beautiful new high school. For more information, please visit the districts' website, www.concordpublicschools.net, and review the CPS & CCRSD 2015 Performance Report.