

The School Committees Report: FY22 Operating Budgets Approved, Expansion of In-School Learning, Position to Direct Diversity, Equity and Engagement

Expansion of In-School Learning

District and school site leaders are planning for an expansion of in-school learning and will be making provisions for, amongst other elements, physical distancing, lunch, transportation, staffing, and the use of outdoor space.

Concord elementary schools will return on Monday, April 5th with four full days and half-days on Wednesdays. Similar to protocols in place for the hybrid model, physical distancing rules of six feet will remain in place as students will remain in their classrooms except for going outside for mask breaks, lunch, and recess when weather permits. Tents will be available for lunch and to provide school sites with flexibility for mask breaks and classes. Any student currently learning remotely will be allowed to continue in the Remote Learning Academy. Screen time for students will be reduced and students will leave technology at the school and will not take it home at the end of the school day.

Concord Middle School will transition on Monday April 26th to in-person learning with four full days and half-days on Wednesdays. The physical constraints of the middle school buildings allow for three feet of social distancing. For those students and families that are seeking fully remote learning, it will remain available to students for the remainder of the school year and the District will distribute a parent survey that will allow families to shift to remote learning if they are no longer comfortable with the in-person environment. Once enrolled in remote learning in March, there is no option to return to in-person learning given space constraints. Students can no longer learn in a hybrid model.

The high school environment presents more complexity than middle and elementary schools and will also be moving to an expanded in-person model starting on April 26th. Like the middle school, three feet of social distancing will be the model given the number of students at the high school. Lunch remains a significant challenge, but six feet of distancing will be maintained while masks are off to eat. Tents will be utilized to help provide options for lunch and flexibility for classes. Remote learning will remain available for students that chose to continue it. More information regarding protocols will be announced in the coming week.

The District's Transportation Department is studying bus routes for both elementary and middle school student populations. Routes will be informed by the number of students opting to take part in the full-day, in-person learning model.

For more information on the expansion of in-person learning as well as the health and safety protocols, individuals can visit the Districts' web site, www.concordps.org.

FY22 Operating Budgets Approved

The School Committees approved their FY22 budget recommendations at their business meeting held on March 16. Committee members conducted a thorough review of the budgets over three meetings which also included public hearings for each district.

A key assumption for the FY22 operating budget was that students and teachers will be back in school full time for the 2021-2022 school year.

The Concord School Committee voted to recommend a 2.28% increase above the existing FY21 budget for a budget level of \$41,708,424. The recommended budgets reflect projected savings in special education tuitions (\$301,730) as more students are now receiving specialized educational services within the District. The budgets also forecast a reduction in CASE transportation costs (\$158,257), and savings

from the early retirement program (\$46,854). These savings offset increases in teachers' salaries (\$693,769), two new bus leases (\$63,903) and projected increases in utility costs (\$35,122). Other increases include the costs for substitutes and field trips which were added back to the budget as the District didn't employ substitutes during the current year and field trips were not possible due to COVID conditions.

The Concord-Carlisle Regional School Committee (CCRSC) adopted a budget recommendation of \$35,759,374 which would be a 2.29% increase above the current FY21 budget. The CCRSC budget recommendation also includes projected savings in special education tuitions (\$223,275) as well as lower debt payments on the high school building (\$159,791) which serve to offset budget increases such as teachers' salaries (\$660,122), new bus leases (\$51,653), and funding for an additional nurse.

Residents of Concord and Carlisle will ultimately decide on final budget levels at the Annual Town Meetings in Carlisle and Concord.

New Position to Direct Diversity, Equity and Engagement

District leaders introduced a concept to the School Committees that would create a new role in the administration to direct the Districts' efforts in diversity, equity, and inclusion. The rationale for the new position includes:

- to bring a diversity, equity, and anti-racist lens to every aspect of the functioning of the districts;
- to improve student experience, particularly for black and brown students;
- to provide faculty and staff with support on cultivating a school culture that is inclusive and elicits a sense of belonging for all students, families, and employees;
- to support all administrators in decision making;
- to be a resource for families and community members; and,
- to be a liaison with community groups and institutions on behalf of the school system.

The Committees and Superintendent Hunter will be discussing this proposal in the next meetings.

Upcoming School Committee Meetings:

Tuesday, March 30 Joint Meeting

Tuesday, April 13 Joint Meeting

All meetings begin at 5pm and zoom links are available on the District website, www.concordps.org. Minuteman Media Network videos all meetings which are available for viewing at either <https://concordma.gov/2335/Minuteman-Media-Network-MMN>, or at www.concordps.org/schoolcommittee/.

Sign up for School Committee News Individuals who are interested in knowing more about the role of the School Committees as well as receiving the latest updates on school budgets and informational events are encouraged to enroll in the "School Committee News" Subscriber List. These updates will include timely information such as meeting dates and agendas, minutes, event announcements, and the School Committee Report. Individuals can sign up at www.concordps.org/school_committee_subscriber_list. Individuals interested in the Concord Middle School Building Committee (a Town of Concord Committee) can find updates and all relevant materials at <https://www.concordps.org/cms-building-project/cms-building-committee-updates/>

The School Committees Contact Information

Concord School Committee Alexa Anderson, Court Booth (Chair), Heather Bout (Vice-Chair of CCRSC), Fatima Mezdad, Cynthia Rainey (Vice-Chair of CPS)

Concord-Carlisle Regional School Committee is comprised of the five Concord School Committee members as well as two Carlisle representatives, Eva Mostoufi, and Sara Wilson (Chair, Regional School Committee)

You can link to the School Committees' emails on the Districts' home page at www.concordps.org. Or, you can email the Concord Public School Committee at concordschoolcommittee@concordps.org and the Concord-Carlisle Regional School Committee at concordcarliseschoolcommittee@concordps.org. You can reach out to the Superintendent and the School Committees through the Your Voice Matters link on the Districts' home page. Interested individuals are encouraged to sign up for the School Committees subscriber's list which is also on the District's web page.