

SCHOOLS

CONCORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Maureen Spada, Chair
 Pamela Gannon, Vice-Chair
 Phil Benincasa
 Peter Fischelis
 Fabian Fondriest
 Jennifer Munn

As 2012 draws to a close, the Concord Public School Committee is thankful to the Town of Concord for their ongoing enthusiasm for education, and consistent financial support for our schools. The Town's support allows us to provide high quality education to our students, provide innovative programming, and hire excellent teachers. This year we saw an increase in citizen involvement at School Committee meetings and we appreciate the interest and feedback we've received. We are proud of our students' accomplishments. We strive to consistently improve our schools as we undertake the responsibility of educating our youth.

We welcomed new School Committee members Phil Benincasa, and Jennifer Munn. We said good-bye and thank you to Jerry Wedge for his 9 years of service on the School Committee and to Peter Fischelis for his 6 years of service on the School Committee. We are deeply saddened by the passing of former School Committee member Jan McGinn. Jan was a dedicated enthusiast for

education and we value her contributions during the 6 years of her service to Concord Public Schools.

Each year the School Committee and the School Administration establish goals for the district. The goals include teaching & learning, finance & operations, and human resources. Specific actions in the goals this year address: mastery of grade-level standards, student assessment, best practices in instruction, the use of technology, social and emotional well-being of students, budget development, and long term solutions for transportation.

School Superintendent Diana Rigby was nominated and elected to the Suburban School Superintendents (SSS) organization. The SSS is an organization of Superintendents who gather each year for an annual conference to collaborate and discuss policy. Members must be elected, and the organization is limited to 100 superintendents. The honor of election into this select organization reflects the respect Superintendent Rigby's peers place on her work in our district.

In June, the School Committee completed the 2011-2012 review of Superintendent Rigby that addressed educational leadership, district management, professional development, equity, community, communication/public relations, and relationship with the School

CONCORD PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT - OCTOBER 1, 2012							
Elementary grade level	K	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL
Alcott	66	62	73	80	89	81	451
Thoreau	84	77	80	76	92	64	473
Willard	<u>76</u>	<u>77</u>	<u>103</u>	<u>89</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>479</u>
Total	226	217	258	248	247	222	1,403
Middle School Grade Level	6	7	8	TOTAL			
Peabody		116	119	113	348		
Sanborn		<u>127</u>	<u>115</u>	<u>109</u>	<u>351</u>		
Total		243	234	222	699		
METCO (included above)	Non-Residents (included above)						
Alcott	29						
Thoreau	24						
Willard	22						
Middle School	<u>26</u>						
TOTAL	101						
TOTAL - CPS	2,102						
Out of District Special Education Students	33						
GRAND TOTAL CPS	2,135						

Committee. Superintendent Rigby received an overall evaluation of commendable, with particular mention of her focus on student learning, the approval of the high school building project, budget management and her enthusiasm.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education requires that a new superintendent evaluation rubric be used for the 2012-2013 school year. As part of her annual goals, Superintendent Rigby is committed to implementing effective communication strategies to respond to disagreement and dissent, constructively resolving conflict, and to building consensus throughout the school community.

Throughout the year, Concord Middle School students and teachers initiated and led CMS Stands Together, an anti-bullying and community-building program. Eighth graders acted as student leaders and mentors for sixth and seventh graders. During the summer, the entire middle school read *Bystander*, an anti-bullying book; they discussed it in English classes upon returning to school in the fall.

Kathy Codianne, Director of Teaching and Learning, worked with 64 Crayons and Moving Media to create a video celebrating our schools. The video features students and teachers discussing their projects and learning environments. The video can be viewed on the district web site at www.concordpublicschools.net. We encourage you to take a few minutes to watch the video and learn more about what our students are doing.

Concord students performed well in MCAS testing. Below is the breakdown of students in grades 5 and 8 who performed at the Advanced or Proficient (A/P) level in the subject areas listed. Detailed results of MCAS scores are posted on the District website as an attachment to the October 2 School Committee meeting handout.

- 85% of grade 5 students - (A/P) English Language Arts
- 87% of grade 5 students - (A/P) Mathematics
- 82% of grade 5 students - (A/P) Science
- 99% of grade 8 students - (A/P) English Language Arts
- 80% of grade 8 students - (A/P) Mathematics
- 82% of grade 8 students - (A/P) Science

The new Massachusetts Common Core State Standards require that technology be embedded in the curriculum. Kathy Codianne, Director of Teaching and Learning,

Kelly Clough, Thoreau Principal, Sue Howard, Thoreau Technology Specialist, and Thoreau 5th grade teachers Karen Hoyt and Susan Erickson presented techniques they use to create “flipped” classrooms. In “flipped” classrooms students take ownership of learning and become experts, while mentoring other students. District Technology Specialists and Gene Warfel, Director of Information Technology joined us at a School Committee meeting for a discussion on how students and teachers use technology tools to enhance learning.

The School Committee and School Administration were pleased to successfully negotiate contract agreements with the Concord Teachers’ Association, Building Service Workers, and the Maintenance Workers unions. A side letter agreement with the Concord Teachers’ Union included the formation of a committee to include School Committee members, teachers, and the School Administration. As part of their work, the committee will review TELL Mass survey results and discuss actions for improvements. School Committee members Fabian Fondriest and Jennifer Munn will serve on this committee.

The Superintendent contracted with a nationally recognized organization, Research for Better Teaching, to work with the Thoreau School community to improve school culture. Research for Better Teaching will focus their work at Thoreau on school improvement and professional development. They have won awards from the Massachusetts Department of Special Education and are a Priority Partner for Turnaround in the Race to the Top initiative. Their report and recommendations are expected in early 2013. We are committed to improving the culture at Thoreau and are confident that this work will result in a positive outcome.

In the spring the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education conducted the TELL (Teaching, Empowering, Leading, & Learning) survey on teaching conditions. The purpose of the survey was “to collect perceptual data on working conditions and school climate and culture in order to promote collaborative discussions between educators and school leadership within school districts” (TELL MASS Survey Institute). In October, Superintendent Rigby presented an overview of the survey and results. In many areas of the survey, our district teachers rated their teaching

environment lower than the Massachusetts average. The presidents of the teachers' unions each responded with a statement expressing their concern about the survey results. The School Committee and School Administration are concerned about the results, and have implemented a series of plans to address issues in our district. At each one of the school sites the principal, leadership teams, and teachers will meet throughout the school year to review the data, assess specific conditions, implement improvements, and monitor results. We are confident that through this work, the 2013 TELL Survey results will show improvement in teachers responses.

We have had some challenging and difficult issues in 2012 with the concerns from the Thoreau community, and the disappointing TELL Mass survey results. The School Committee and the School Administration team are committed to working through these issues as we continue in the proud tradition of educational excellence. We are pleased that our educator retention rate for Concord Public Schools was 96.4%

We experienced a significant increase in enrollment over the summer for the school year 2012-2013. A total of 145 students enrolled in Concord Public Schools this year, for a total of 2,012 students in our district as of October 1. Students from the new development, Concord Mews, were enrolled at both Thoreau and Alcott. We added staff at Alcott, Thoreau and Concord Middle School in response to the increased enrollment. The School Committee and Administration have undertaken an enrollment study with the results due in early 2013. In FY2014, staff increases are budgeted to address the increased enrollment.

Aaron Jonas, our METCO Director presented an annual report to the School Committee. Concord first began participating in the METCO program in 1967. Today the program continues as a rich and vibrant opportunity "to expand educational opportunities, increase diversity, and reduce racial isolation, by permitting students in certain cities to attend public schools in other communities that have agreed to participate" (www.doe.mass.edu/metco/). Currently Concord Public Schools enrolls 70 METCO students in K-5. There are 25 METCO students at Concord Middle School. A State grant provides funding for staff, transportation and student support programs. A Parent Advisory Council

provides input for improvement and additional support. Achievement initiatives include kindergarten orientation and a summer readiness program, family friends activities, tutors, and summer school. A district goal is to increase the academic achievement of METCO students.

We continue to provide special education services to all qualified students ages 3-22. Concord is seeing an increase in services for medically fragile and developmentally delayed students, and an increase in students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

The Concord School Committee and the School Administration work together to develop operating budgets that preserve educational programs and are respectful of the taxpayers in Concord. These budgets are discussed in a series of meetings in the fall with the Finance Committee.

When the impact of the high school building project on the transportation facility become clear, the School Administration and the School Committee began to explore options for busing students. They reviewed the availability of Town-owned facilities and subsequently issued an Invitation to Bid (IFB) for private busing services. The Administration held a Public Forum in February to hear opinions and answer questions from citizens. In late February, after careful consideration, they withdrew the initial IFB. A second IFB for private transportation services that included the sale of the fleet was then authorized. In March, the School Committee conducted a survey to gather information from parents on their willingness to pay bus fees. Many parents expressed concern about paying fees for transportation; others expressed concern that charging fees would result in parents driving their kids to school. At Town Meeting, the Town authorized the creation of the Citizens Transportation Committee (CTC) with a charge to "search diligently for ways to maintain the existing bus transportation department." The CTC studied level of service, safety, cost, social factors, and intangibles. In May, the School Committee formed a Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) to study transportation and make recommendations for long-term transportation solutions, identify a site, and develop a cost analysis.

While long term transportation options were researched, the School Committees authorized the Administration to issue an RFP for a leased facility for repair of buses. During the summer, bus maintenance moved to a rented space in Billerica, and transportation management moved into office space at Ripley. In October, a leased facility in Acton was rented for parking of buses. These three components comprise an interim transportation solution.

The Citizens Transportation Committee (CTC) presented their findings to the School Committee in October. The CTC recommended keeping transportation at its current location on the CCHS campus. The CTC report is available on the Town web page www.concordma.gov. The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) also presented their finding to the School Committee. The TAC worked with the Board of Selectmen, Town Manager and a range of Town Departments to research municipal properties in Concord. The TAC also looked at safety and level of service and found no inherent advantages or disadvantages between public and private transportations services. Rather, the district's management and oversight is the most important factor in maintaining a high level of service. After considering more than 20 different scenarios, the TAC chose the former Town landfill as the best option for locating a transportation depot. The School Committee unanimously approved a Feasibility Study of the former Town landfill to investigate the possibility of using it as a location for the bus depot.

Thank you to the many organizations and people in Concord who work with us on our great school system. We especially appreciate the Parent Teacher Groups, The Concord Education Fund, The Community Chest, and private donors who generously contribute in so many ways. We look forward to seeing residents at Town Meeting and at School Committee meetings. We hope you will visit our district web page (www.concordpublicschools.net) and stay in touch with us. We look ahead to 2013 with optimism and high expectations for ourselves, for our teachers, our Administration, and most of all, for our students.

CITIZENS TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE (CTC)

Lisa Bergen, Chair
Louise Haldeman, Clerk
Mark Anderson
Ray Bruttomesso
Kate Damon
Abe Fisher
Mark Hanson

Article 4 of the Concord Special Town meeting on April 24, 2012 requested that the Town form a committee of citizens to investigate ways to retain the transportation department as part of the Concord School system rather than outsourcing it to a private company. Following passage of the article and as specified by it, four committee members were appointed by the Concord Town Moderator and three by the School Committee. Although Carlisle representation was originally desired, the Town of Carlisle declined to participate. Therefore, all members were Concord residents.

The CTC began meeting in May following the close of Town Meeting and continued until it issued its final report in October. The Committee initially met bi-weekly and more frequently as the work progressed. All members became very conversant with the working of the School Transportation Department and developed great respect for the manner in which the Department carries out its duties.

The Committee identified five major areas of research:

Safety- which involved a review of accident statistics, bus construction, law enforcement, driver training and, last but not least, student safety.

Social Factors- also called "Intangibles," which concerned how the public perceived the transportation department and how its members see themselves. How would out-sourcing affect the relationship.

Emergency Preparedness- An examination of the role the Transportation Department plays as part of Town Emergency response and how privatization might alter it.

Site Selection- A study of how much land and what facilities are necessary in order to establish an efficient working bus depot and where such a facility could be