

Annual Town Report 2008
Concord Public Schools
Concord-Carlisle Regional School District
Superintendent's Report
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Change and Progress in Concord Public Schools and Concord-Carlisle Regional School District

The communities of Concord and Carlisle are committed to the well-being of their young people, and citizens and school faculty/staff members work hard to ensure that all students increase their learning and develop their skills needed in being thoughtful, knowledgeable, and socially responsible contributors to our world. We review our annual accomplishments with a heartfelt and public thank you to educators, staff, parents, and community members who have invested their knowledge, skills, experience, time, and resources in improving our schools. Our students continue to achieve at very high levels because of you. This annual report will highlight the accomplishments and challenges of 2008 and identify the important work which will continue in the next year.

The school districts continue to make progress in developing responsive and responsible budgets, increasing student achievement, improving human resource services, and updating technology and facilities. A major highlight of 2008 is the construction of the new Willard school, a state-of-the art, "green" facility designed by Office of Michael Rosenfeld, managed by Daedalus projects, and constructed by CTA construction with doors opening for students in September 2009. On April 15, the groundbreaking ceremony celebrated the construction of Concord's third elementary school which meets the emerging instructional needs in the 21st century. The district is most grateful for the overwhelming support from town members. The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) has determined reimbursement costs for Thoreau and has requested submission of statements of interest for Willard and CCHS.

The districts have maintained academic programs of excellence despite the state fiscal constraints. The core operating principle informing the budget development process is that all resources of the school districts support student learning and growth. District goals approved by the school committee identified 2008 priorities and informed the budget process. Recognizing the emerging district needs and the finite financial resources of both towns, the school committee and district administration worked closely with the finance committees and selectmen to develop responsible 2008 budgets within the levy limit guidelines developed by the Concord Finance Committee. The FY 08 budget appropriation for CCHS was \$20,365,127 for 12 59 students and \$26,423,840 for 1809 CPS students. The school districts managed successful completions of year end closings for the past four fiscal years with modest surpluses in each year for each district. The regional school district Excess and Deficiency (E&D) fund balance for the past fiscal year has been maintained above the 4.6% level. Boston Magazine in September 2008 identified Concord-Carlisle in the top "50 Best Public High Schools" and ranked CCHS number one in "cost efficiency".

The districts continued to make progress implementing five year capital plans supported by the towns. CPS capital projects completed over the year include the following: at Peabody the front entry was upgraded, the recreation area was expanded, and new walls, kitchen sink, and cabinets were installed in the family and consumer science kitchen. At Sanborn, the windows were replaced and the main entry sidewalks and driveway were repaved. Exterior doors were replaced at Ripley, and the parking lot was repaved. At Thoreau school, an outdoor pavilion was installed and the ventilation noise in the 94 wing has been reduced. CCRSD capital projects include the installation of energy efficient fluorescent sport lights in the lower gym and upgrading the lighting in the library. Projects to be completed in the next year include the new transportation building and the Human Resources/Financial systems. The schools offer heartfelt thanks to the citizens of both Concord and Carlisle for addressing compelling capital concerns over recent years. We are also very appreciative of the generosity of the Concord Education

Fund for their support of two very exciting projects: a state-of-the-art Digital Recording Studio at CCHS and an expanded science laboratory with completion dates in 2009.

All district efforts focus on improving teaching and learning, and students continue to achieve at high levels. At CPS, the kindergarten teachers completed a program evaluation and determined that more instructional time was required to manage the instructional pace and to increase student success with reading/math readiness and social skills. In January 2008, a parent forum was offered to discuss the new Kindergarten schedule of 3 full days and 2 half days with one afternoon reserved for individual and small group specialized instruction. Kindergarten parents, administrators, and teachers report that the new schedule has been implemented successfully this past fall, and students have benefitted from a slower pace of activities and more individualized instruction. Summer school 2008 successfully provided more than 225 preK-12 general and special education students with four weeks instruction in reading, writing, and math skills. The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) results were strong, with all subgroups except special education meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in English Language Arts (ELA); all subgroups except special education in grades 3-8 met AYP in math. Grade level teams, math specialists, and principals met monthly to discuss student math performance and strategies for intervention for special education students. At the middle school level, students in Focused Math piloted I-Succeed, a web-based curriculum. After school tutoring in math provided additional assistance for underperforming students. K-5 educators also continued their partnership with the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Network to develop students as writers. At Concord-Carlisle High School, MCAS performance was among the very best in the state, with every member of the Class of 2008 receiving a passing score and meeting the state graduation requirement. Of grade 10 students, 97% scored in the advanced/proficient categories of ELA, with 94% scoring advanced/proficient in mathematics, and 95% scoring advanced/proficient in Science/Tech./Engineering. The median SAT score for the Class of 2008 was 1860 (with 1511 as the state average). Seven students in the Class of 2008 have qualified as National Merit Scholar Semi-Finalists. In 2008, 96% of students taking the Advanced Placement (AP) exam received a passing score, and overall 77% of AP exams were scored at 4 or 5. The average number of CCHS graduates planning to continue their education in postsecondary placements exceeded 90%, and students are very successful in attending highly selective institutions (colleges that admit 40% or fewer applicants).

Recognizing that the strength of the school system lies in its teachers, the district invested considerable resources in professional development providing educators with technology training in Active Studio software for the ActivBoard, Microsoft Office Suite, Web Tools 2.0, web design, and Primary Math Assessments. During the weekend of July 12/13 Thoreau school hosted Promethean's Activ08 User's conference for more than 225 educators from 22 states and countries. Twelve Concord and Concord-Carlisle technology specialists and teachers made us extremely proud with their presentations at the conference. More than 300 educators spent summer days working collaboratively with grade-level or department teams to review, refine, and develop new curricular units. K-12 educators invested considerable efforts in meeting the districts' 2008 goal of expanding the global education program through the following activities: Hosting international visitors from China, Japan, Ecuador, and two exchange students from Turkmenistan and participating in student-teacher study tours to numerous countries (Japan, England, France, Ecuador, Canada, and China) during the 2008 year. The CCHS band welcomed the return visit of the acclaimed Sapporo Shiroishi Symphonic Wind Ensemble from Hokkaido, Japan. Both bands combined for a historic international joint concert, "Music Knows No Borders", at Boston's Symphony Hall in March.

In May, the districts honored seasoned staff members retiring after a collective 236 years of dedicated service. We offer heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the four CPS and five CCHS teachers who retired in June 2008. Superintendent Dr. Brenda Finn also retired in August, having served as the districts' instructional leader for the past five years; the districts thank Brenda for her outstanding leadership in guiding the K-12 school system during years of excellence and progress. (The human resources report which follows acknowledges the resignations and

retirements occurring at the conclusion of the 2008 year.) In the spring, the joint school committees expressed gratitude to Michael Fitzgerald of Carlisle, Chad Koski of Carlisle, and Becky Shannon of Concord for their years of outstanding public service on behalf of students. Pamela Gannon of Concord, Louis Salemy of Carlisle, and Dale Ryder of Carlisle were greeted as new school committee members. In September 2008, Concord Public Schools welcomed 17 new teachers and 1809 students; at CCHS nine new teachers joined the district with a student enrollment of 1259. Eleven new support staff members also began work in the districts during the 2008 year. The combined districts were fortunate to hire a new director of teaching and learning, Kathy Codianne, formerly a middle school principal in Sudbury. Interim Metco director, Kim Bovell, became the Metco director to provide oversight, direction, and support to the METCO program. John Flaherty, former director of operations and finance, became deputy superintendent and Diana Rigby, former assistant superintendent, was hired by the school committees as the new school superintendent commencing September 2008.

The human resources office focused on updating, enhancing, and creating the infrastructure to promote the effectiveness, efficiency, and well-being of staff. A new substitute teacher training and handbook were developed which encompasses a half-day training requirement with the director of human resources on policy and procedures, the school resource officer on safety procedures, and a school nurse on universal precautions and life-threatening allergies. The employee handbook continued to be revised and updated, and discrimination and harassment training was instituted for many employees. A "Wellness at Work" program designed to provide employees with health and wellness information and experiences was successfully implemented. Existing position descriptions were revised as necessary, and meetings with both teacher unions to develop a new teacher supervision and evaluation system were begun. Collaboration between Information Technology, Payroll, and Human Resources offices resulted in the linkage of Human Resources and payroll records for all Regional employees. A new robust web-based applicant pool tracking system was instituted for both districts; training on the new system was attended by principals and supervisors. The Criminal History Systems Board provided training on proper CORI handling and usage for principals and selected central office staff. Finally, a three-year contract with the secretaries union was successfully negotiated.

During 2008, the districts have continued to make impressive progress in information technology services. At CCHS, the highlight is the building of the Digital Music Recording studio thanks to the generosity of the Concord Education Fund. The core equipment has been purchased and students will be able to begin recording music during second semester 2009. The network infrastructure was upgraded with new switches to replace equipment that was put in place in 2001. Additional laptop carts and IMacs were added to the library and a multimedia work area with eight computers was added upstairs to enable teachers to pilot new software and multimedia projects. High school teachers have continued to develop their skills in ActivStudio, and a new tool, Active Expression, is being used to allow free form text and numerical student responses. In the digital arts program, students use a very complex and sophisticated process, three dimensional modeling software, to create various objects. At Concord Public Schools, the network infrastructure and file servers were updated at all of the K8 schools, except for the old Willard Building. A new web tool, Rapid Web Design, has been introduced by the Technology Specialists, and it allows teachers to simplify and speed up web development. The Technology Specialists continue to provide daily technical assistance and professional development to increase teachers' skills in integrating technology tools with curriculum.

Special education services continue to focus on providing excellent special education services in the neighborhood schools. During the 2008 year, special education teachers and administrators invested considerable efforts in the following projects: completing the Coordinated Program Reviews for both CPS and CCRSD, training on the identification of students with Specific Learning Disabilities per new federal and state regulations, collaborating with the parent community, and piloting new research-based curriculum designed for students with disabilities. Preschool special education services were strengthened by developing a social skills curriculum, helping students and families in the transition process from preschool to kindergarten, increasing

“typical peers” capacity to 90%, and providing professional development for integrating service areas into all the classrooms. At the elementary level, the district focused on improving the IEP process and expediting the paperwork to parents, implementing the Response to Intervention model, participating in the Kathy Richardson math trainings with general education colleagues, and revising the specialized instruction in math for special education students. At Concord Middle School, special educators and administrators increased the integration of special education staff into general education departments for collaborative curriculum development and revision. Communication between special and general educators was enhanced by focusing on the needs of special education students during monthly house meetings. The I-Succeed web-based math program was implemented at the focus math level. At CCHS, the capacity to serve more special education students increased with the implementation of Challenge II program, an intermediary placement between the mainstream and the Alternative Program. The district continued to develop strategies to serve students with severe disabilities by collaborating with local community colleges and the Special Education Parents Advisory Council. The clinical team meetings have been reinstated to discuss student concerns and progress in special education programs and placements. Staff participated in ongoing professional development in areas identified by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education program review report. Special education staff worked with Carlisle Public Schools and Minuteman Vocational Technical High School to ensure appropriate special education services for transitioning freshmen students.

Highlights of Accomplishments in the Concord Public Schools for the 2008 year:

Alcott School

- Thirty-five students in grade five participated in the Mathematical Olympiads Program, Nineteen students finished in the top 50%, four students received a silver pin for finishing in the top 10%, and one student received a gold pin for finishing in the top 2%. The Alcott school was named to the National High Achievement List for the score in the top 10% of all participating teams.
- The fifth grade Destination Imagination Team finished in first place at the regional and State competitions. They represented Massachusetts at the Global Competition in Knoxville, Tenn. The team finished in ninth place in the spontaneous section and 29th overall as they competed against teams from across the United States and World.
- Students at the annual Turkey Trot ran 2,122 laps and raised over \$7,000 for local charities. Open Table, The Children’s Room and the Concord Summer Recreation Department each received a donation to support families and children in need.
- Students demonstrated their social responsibility in providing resources for those in need as evidenced in the following activities: fifth grade students made crafts and games to raise money for the Alcott Family Fund; second graders trick or treat for UNICEF; and fourth graders gave letters, gifts, and donations to organizations around the world.
- Fifth grade students participated in the annual Art Retrospective, sharing their favorite art pieces and commenting on their development as artists in elementary school. An exhibition of student work was then open to the public for viewing of the students’ work documenting their artistic growth through the years.
- The “Festival Band” was comprised of 40 students from each of the three elementary schools. They rehearsed for eight weeks prior to the annual Massachusetts Instrumental and Choral Conducting Association gathering on April 5, 2008. The silver medal was awarded to the Festival Band, and after the performance, the students attended a clinic where they received feedback and help from the Assistant Dean of the Boston Conservatory, Dr. Jim O’Dell.

- The Teen Buddy program, which pairs thirty high school students with thirty elementary students, met twice a month in group building, leadership, and positive social development activities.
- Students increased their math skills by participating in before-school and after-school math clubs, Family Math night, and flexible math groupings in grades three, four, and five.
- The Alcott Green Monsters, the student environmental club, initiated many recycling activities such as the addition and maintenance of eight new recycle bins to help the school recycle all cardboard, paper, plastic, and metal. The Concord Public Works recognized the Green Monsters with a Certificate of Achievement for increasing the amount of recycling at the school. The Monsters were also recognized by the Concord Water Conservation organization for their efforts in the water conservation challenge.
- The annual Variety Show in June featured students and teachers singing, dancing, and playing instruments and raised \$4,500 to benefit the children at the Russian orphanage #63, Ubuhle Babantwana in Cape Town, South Africa, Casa Do Zezinho in Sao Paula, Brazil, and St. Mary's Academy in the heart of New Orleans.
- Fourth and fifth grade students participated in the Massachusetts Children's Book Award vote in February, each reading or listening to five of the twenty-five nominated titles, writing a book review on one, and adding to a binder of student reading recommendations called "Alcott Accolades".
- The third graders shared their recorder skills with their parents in March, playing fifteen songs at a concert.
- Students in grades one and five performed Gymnastics Shows showcasing their tumbling and apparatus skills in February. Grade one students performed on the mat, balance beam, rings, and ropes for their parents. Grade five students performed mat and dance skills in a choreographed performance for students, teachers, and parents.

Thoreau School

- Through a \$35,000 grant, the Concord Education Fund has generously supported the construction of a handicapped accessible trail from the Thoreau School to the Assabet River. Construction began in the fall of 2007 and was completed in the spring of 2008. An Opening Ceremony was held on site in June 2008 and the trail is now in full use, allowing teachers and students easy access to the river.
- Fourth grade students benefited from instruction in Chinese poetry, calligraphy, and brush painting by artist-in-residence Steve Ratiner, who taught students to use meditation and visualization to enhance their writing efforts
- Monthly whole-school assemblies were held to increase school spirit and foster a sense of community.
- The PTG supported educational programs by hosting guest speakers, musicians, and other performers. The PTG also sponsored the spelling bee, a bingo night, Family Math night, and the annual cake walk. In May, the Thoreau PTG hosted the second annual Thoreau 5K Road Race which drew over 200 participants.
- Revised Investigations, the new math curriculum, was successfully implemented at all grade levels. Monthly meetings with the principal and math specialist were held for each grade level to review progress and to assist teachers.

- A committee of the principal, math specialist, and special education teachers met over the summer to improve the alignment of the special education and general education curricula for fall implementation.
- Through the generosity of a Thoreau family, an outside pavilion was installed to provide both a “quiet zone” at recess for those students who prefer to play board games or engage in art activities and an outside classroom space.
- A green committee, “Thoreauly Green”, was formed including faculty and parents. An assembly was held to educate students about “Reuse, Recycle, Reduce”. A trash free week was held during lunchtime. An energy efficient dishwasher was purchased as well as trays and silverware to eliminate the use for Styrofoam and plastic utensils.
- A METCO committee was formed including parents who organize “Family Friends” program, principal, and the social worker. Monthly meetings were held to improve parent communication with Boston families.

Willard School

- The entire fifth grade student population participated in the Massachusetts Book Award program, a state wide reading incentive program. Students read a minimum of five books from an official list compiled by the Salem State College Educational Studies Department. Willard students also wrote book reviews for each book read. All participants participated in statewide voting to select the Massachusetts Book Award winner from the list.
- This year marked the third year of the student literary magazine, The Beanstalk. Funded by a grant from the Cambridge Savings Bank, the magazine is published three times a year. The staff is comprised of 60 students in grades 4 and 5. Under the supervision of a few faculty advisors, students managed all phases of the magazine; selecting submissions, illustrating, editing, layout design, word processing and scanning.
- The entire student population gathered for Ground Breaking Ceremonies for the new Willard School in April 15th. All grade levels participated in the formal speaking portion of the program with the inclusion of a few student speakers from each grade level expressing their appreciation to the Concord community. All students joined with the district and community officials by participating in a ceremonial “digging of the soil” with commemorative plastic shovels purchased by the Willard PTG for this memorable event. Since the Ground Breaking ceremony, teachers have embraced the construction theme by encouraging discussions of construction equipment and observing evolving changes of the new building. Students and staff gathered in September to celebrate the Topping Off of the new building, a ceremony that signals the end of the steel-framing portion of the project.
- The Willard Earth Care Club completed its second year by launching a new green initiative this fall, “ Reduce, Reuse, Recycle,” which encourages students and staff to reduce the amount of paper by using both sides of paper before recycling.
- All fifth grade students participated in the annual Art Retrospective which provided a forum for students to share their favorite art pieces produced throughout their K-5 experience at Willard. Students chose their work, framed it, labeled it with a nametag, and arranged their display. Each student also reflected on his/her experience and personal development as an artist in elementary school through a descriptive essay. These steps represent the process an artist might follow when preparing his/her art work for exhibit. Families and community members were invited to view students’ work and celebrate each student’s artistic evolution. A choral performance by the fifth grade students capped off the evening.

- The fifth grade chorus was invited to sing with the Boston Children's Choir at the town wide Martin Luther King celebration in January.
- Instrumental music students demonstrated their talents during a few concerts for family and friends.
- Willard students and families participated in a variety of outreach efforts such as the food drive in March to benefit Open Table and Trick or Treating for UNICEF.
- All students and teachers worked on-site with staff developers from the Teachers College Reading and Writing Network Project (TCWRP) Teachers and students have benefited from the demonstration lessons delivered by the TCWRP facilitators. After the demonstration lesson for each grade level, each grade level teaching team met with the facilitator to debrief the lesson. Student writing has improved significantly with this professional development experience.
- The Beanpod, an offshoot of the Willard Radio Show, continued its second year of operation with Willard School Podcasts. Fourteen students have participated in two podcasts by sharing poems, factual information, and interviews with a listening audience.
- During 2008, many Willard students engaged in a variety of math activities including Math Masters program, Math Olympiad, Family Math, and by accessing the new Willard math website to try the monthly math challenge and explore links to math games and websites.
- During the library period in 2008 fifth graders created and shared safety posters and Internet safety podcasts. They also created special illustrated shelf guides to assist the younger students in locating books more easily. Fourth graders wrote stories in Historical Fiction, Mystery, and Fantasy formats. Fourth graders also researched and created the script for the all school Winter Solstice assembly. Third graders created plays, essays, and dioramas describing the cultures and lifestyles of different North American Indian Tribes. Students in grades 3-5 used the Renzulli Learning Program to research various subjects and demonstrate their newly acquired knowledge through essays and reports. First graders participated in weather wiki among the classes. Kindergarten students created drawings showing "A Day in the Life" of a Concord student which were sent to our sister school in Nanae, Japan.

Concord Middle School

- On the 2008 MCAS, 93% of eighth grade students scored Proficient or Advanced in English Language Arts.
- Thirty-seven grade 8 Spanish students and 26 grade 8 French students participated in the National Spanish and French exams. Fifteen Spanish students scored in the top 5% nationally – an additional eight scored in the top 15% and three more in the top 25%. Four French students scored in the top 5% and one student in the top 10% and four more students in the top 20%.
- A grade eight Spanish student won first prize in a national poster contest sponsored by the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP). The theme of the contest was "Una Ventana al Mundo" (A Window to the World).
- Sixth grade students studied early humans and ancient civilizations in the sixth grade as part of a new social studies curriculum.

- A CMS student participated in the state level National Geography Bee competition in February.
- Community members and the MERU Foundation organized India Day for seventh graders in April. Students created crafts, learned folk dances, and circulated through the exhibits.
- Eighth grade students conducted new labs in which they could use photogates to measure acceleration, time, and speed on ramps and a roller coaster track.
- Seventh grade students completed an investigation using software in which they examined an ecosystem in the northwestern United States and determined the reason for a population decrease among sea otters.
- Seventh grade students integrated the sketching skills they have developed in art class with their study of marine life in science class on a field trip to the New Hampshire seacoast led by science and art teachers.
- More than 75 students performed as cast or crew in "Forty-Second Street" in April 2008.
- Eighteen CMS students traveled to China during April 2008 as part of the exchange with Sunshine Middle School.
- CMS students worked with Maintenance Supervisor, Dave Anderson, to design a new recreation area for Peabody school.
- CMS students with guidance from faculty ran a mock election for President and they also selected a new school mascot, the CMS cougar.

A report of progress and accomplishments in the 2008 year at Concord-Carlisle High School follows.