

Annual Town Report 2009
Concord Public Schools
Concord-Carlisle Regional School District
Superintendent's Report
Diana F. Rigby

Progress in Concord Public Schools and Concord-Carlisle Regional School District

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.

The school districts continue to make good progress in increasing student achievement, developing responsive and responsible budgets, improving special education services, and updating human resource services, technology, and facilities. The major highlight of Fall 2009 was the grand opening of the new Willard elementary school, a state-of-the-art, high performance, green school. Designed by the local award-winning architectural firm, Office of Michael Rosenfeld, the building meets state energy efficiency standards with south facing classrooms for maximum solar orientation, energy-conservation measures, use of recycled building materials, and sophisticated mechanical systems. The Willard is the third and last of the three new elementary schools built in Concord over the past five years. Alcott was built in 2004, and Thoreau was completed in 2006. These new school buildings are testaments to Concord's commitment to excellence in education for the elementary students in our care, and the school community is eternally grateful for this remarkable investment.

All district efforts focus on improving teaching and learning, and students continue to achieve at high levels. The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) results were strong with Grade 5 students ranking 8th for English, 4th for Math, and 14th for Science! Grade 10 students at CCHS ranked 16th for English and 7th for Science. Ninety-six percent of Concord Middle School's eighth grade students scored Proficient or Advanced on the 2009 MCAS. At CPS, teachers developed math assessments to determine flexible group placements and to monitor student progress. Grade level teachers, math curriculum specialists, and principals met monthly to review the math program and student assessment data. Struggling students were provided remedial support and advanced students received math enrichment activities. Grade 5 students participated in the Math Olympiad with the majority of students finishing in the top 50%. Field investigations have also been incorporated in the Science curriculum with fifth grade students studying the biodiversity of the Merrimack River estuary environment and fourth grade students raising Blanding and snapper turtles. Digital tools such as podcasts, blogs, and wikis and Activsoftware are used daily by students to create multi-media presentations. Elementary students participated in global education activities ranging from fourth grade lessons in Chinese poetry to hosting Japanese visitors from Nanae, skyping international classrooms, and connecting with international students through E-pals. At Concord Middle School, sixth and seventh grade students participated in the Science Olympiad State Meet and placed second in two events, and placed sixth in two other events. Eighteen seventh grade students traveled to China during April 2009 as part of the exchange with Sunshine Middle School. For the third consecutive year, the Student Connections survey was administered and results indicated increased participation in after school activities and increased connections between students and adults. Student leadership opportunities were also expanded to include spirit week, community service week, and the Presidential debates and election. At Concord-Carlisle High School, 100% of the Class of 2009 received a Competency Determination as a result of passing both the English Language Arts and Math MCAS tests. Ninety-six percent of tenth grade students scored proficient or advanced on the ELA MCAS and ninety-four percent of the 10th grade students scored proficient or advanced on the Math MCAS. Ninety-five percent of the 10th grade students passed one of the Science MCAS tests. The median SAT score for the Class of 2009 was 1870 (with 1509 as the state average). Seven students in the Class of 2009 have qualified as National

Merit Scholar Semi-Finalists and two National Merit Scholarships were ultimately awarded. Ninety-eight percent of AP Exams taken by CCHS students received a passing score, and overall 77% of AP exams were scored at 4 or 5 (the highest scores). The average number of CCHS graduates planning to continue their education in postsecondary placements exceeded 90%. In a survey of graduating seniors, 65% reported they were admitted to their 1st choice college, and 19% were admitted to their 2nd choice college. The school districts received top rankings in the state from the Boston Globe, #1, and Boston Magazine, #3, this fall.

The districts have maintained excellent academic programs despite the challenging economic climate and declining state revenues. The core operating principle informing the budget development process is that all resources of the school districts support student learning and growth. The 2009 District goals approved by the school committee identified priorities and informed the budget process. Recognizing the emerging district needs and the finite financial resources of both towns, the district administration and school committee worked closely with the finance committees and selectmen to develop responsible 2009 budgets. These budgets are within the levy limit guidelines developed by the Concord Finance Committee. The school districts managed successful completions of year-end closings, and CPS was able to return more than \$200,000 to the Town. The Regional School District's Excess and Deficiency (E&D) fund balance for the past fiscal year has been maintained above the 4.5% level.

The districts continued to make progress implementing capital plans supported by the towns. We offer heartfelt thanks to the citizens for addressing compelling capital concerns. At Sanborn, the last phase of the window replacement was completed. New chemical storage safety cabinets and Energy Star rated dishwashers were installed at both Peabody and Sanborn. The new Transportation building was completed on the CCHS campus. Last June, both towns approved a \$750,000 debt exclusion for the following capital projects: facilities master plan, replacement of auditorium curtains, fire alarm upgrade, main office renovations, AC compressor replacement in the main office and auditorium, waterless urinals, and AC in the music room. The Digital Recording Studio, generously funded by Concord Education fund (\$61,000), was completed and student musicians are recording their music on a weekly basis. The Concord Education Fund also funded the Hooked on Science facility (\$80,000). A Life Skills classroom was built using \$50,000 Federal ARRA funds to serve special education students with significant needs. The Facilities Master Plan committee was formed in July 2009, and is meeting bimonthly to determine the optimal plan for the building project at CCHS. The Committee selected the Office of Michael Rosenfeld to complete the Architectural and Engineering services for the master plan. The Facilities Master Plan Committee is expecting to make a final recommendation to the Regional School Committee in March 2010. Meanwhile, the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) has invited CCHS to participate in a feasibility study for a building repair project.

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 ActivStudio software, Activotes, ActivExpressions for the ActivBoard, Web 2.0 tools, web design, X2 student information system and the web portal for employees. During the summer there were 27 elementary curriculum development projects, five at the middle school, and six at CCHS. K-4 projects included work at grades one through four to develop common math assessments and to integrate instructional and assessment materials from the Kathy Richardson program into the Investigations program. For grade 5, special education teachers worked with math curriculum specialists to develop intervention modules for students who struggle with skill attainment. Kindergarten teachers worked together to evaluate the first year of Full Day Kindergarten, share lessons, and to develop flip charts for the ActivBoard in math and language arts. Fourth grade teachers participated in a two-day workshop to develop an implementation plan for using the Teachers College Reading Workshop model. Teachers in grades 2, 3, and 5 revised science units and created curriculum maps and common assessments. At the Middle School, teachers worked on a project to coordinate the 6th grade language arts program and the Developmental Language Arts program. Special education teachers planned for co-teaching in the Intensive ELA classroom and sixth grade social studies teachers developed differentiated

lessons and common assessments. Eighth grade math and science teachers created a method for coordinating the teaching of linear equations and graphs. Eighth grade Science teachers also worked with the technology and engineering teacher to refine their curricula to more fully incorporate lab experiences for students. At CCHS, projects included curriculum development for a creative writing course, evaluation and revision of the COMPASS and Network programs, and the development of a coordinated skills tutorial program for special education students. Fifty-nine teachers in grades 6-12 participated in the ActivBoard training, nineteen high school teachers learned how to use the Dreamweaver program to design websites, and seven middle and high school teachers were trained in the Moodle software to offer online courses to their students.

In May, the district honored seasoned staff members retiring after a collective 350 years of dedicated service. We offer heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the five CPS and six CCHS teachers who retired in June 2009. Principal Arthur Unobskey resigned to return to the Boston school district and we thank Arthur for his excellent leadership at Concord Middle School for the past five years. Lynne Beattie, the former Assistant Principal at the Middle School, was chosen to lead the CMS. James Lin, former Lexington Middle School Science teacher, was hired as the new Assistant Principal. Aaron Joncas, former METCO tutor, was promoted to the METCO Director position (the human resources report which follows acknowledges the resignations and retirements occurring at the conclusion of the 2009 calendar year.) In the spring, both Jerry Wedge and Peter Fischelis were re-elected as school committee members. In September 2009, Concord Public schools welcomed 22 new teachers and 1839 students; at CCHS eight new teachers joined the district with a student enrollment of 1268. Twenty-five new support staff members also began work in the districts during the 2008-9 school year.

The human resources office focused on supporting the learning environment and enhancing communications with employees. The employee handbook continued to be revised and updated and discrimination and harassment training has been instituted for employees. The "Wellness at Work" program, which is designed to provide employees with health and wellness information and experiences, was successfully implemented. Jon Kabat-Zinn, renowned international mindfulness expert and author, was a guest speaker. Meetings with both teacher unions to develop a new teacher supervision and evaluation system continued. Collaboration between IT, Payroll, Business, and HR offices resulted in the implementation of a new financial/HR database system. Included in the new system is the establishment of a secure web portal for employees which will automate all levels of attendance and requisition systems. The new employee web portal will store pay information for each employee with the goal of becoming paperless. Three-year contracts with the Concord Teachers Association, Transportation, Maintenance employees, and two Building Service Workers unions were successfully negotiated.

During 2009, the districts have continued to make impressive progress in information technology services. At CCHS, the highlight is the completion of the Digital Recording studio, generously funded by the Concord Education Fund. Student music ensembles, soloists, and student bands have been recording their performances on a weekly basis.

A new type of wireless access point made by Xirrus was piloted in the library to offer support for the latest wireless standards, and to support more computers simultaneously. Based upon the success of the pilot, Xirrus units were implemented in all of the K-8 schools and a portion of the high school. The high school installation is projected to be completed within the next several months. All schools have high-speed wireless available throughout the buildings to support the increased use of laptop carts in the classrooms. Old interactive white boards and projectors have been replaced. Thirty-three MAC OSX Xservers in seven buildings were updated to the latest Mac OSX 10.5 OS. The Unifund project was completed, and the new system is running live for General Ledger, Payroll/HR, and Purchasing. The IT staff prepared for and installed the new technology in the new Willard, including servers, workstations, and the network infrastructure. A new phone system was installed at Willard and it serves as the central voice mail system for all schools. The Internet bandwidth was greatly increased by the new 100-megabit fiber optic Internet connection in partnership with the Town and the Concord Municipal Light Plant. The Technology Specialists continue to provide daily technical assistance, coaching and professional

development for teachers to increase their skills in integrating technology tools in daily classroom lessons.

Special education services continue to focus on providing quality special education services in the district schools. During the 2009 year, special education teachers and administrators invested considerable time and efforts in the following projects: reducing out-of-district placements by developing in district programs, increasing use of technology tools for students, implementing the Response to Intervention model in the elementary schools, and participating in professional development in special education math strategies. Preschool special education services were strengthened by improving the transition process from prek to Kindergarten, training in Applied Behavioral Analysis pedagogy and practices, and piloting a single age group model. At the elementary level, the district focused on the monitoring of math achievement in special education and the appropriate intervention strategies. At Concord Middle School, math instruction for special education students was also reviewed to increase math achievement. In September 2009, the Life Skills Learning classroom for students with significant disabilities was opened at CCHS to provide daily living instruction. Additionally, a support network for high school students with significant emotional issues was developed in collaboration with the school adjustment counselor.

Highlights of Accomplishments in the Concord Public Schools for the 2009-year:

Alcott:

- Thirty-five students in grade five participated in the Mathematical Olympiad Program. Twenty-five students finished in the top 50% and two students received a silver pin for finishing in the top 10%. The Math Olympiad Program serves over 4,500 teams and 100,000 students nationally and about 1,800 teams and 45,000 students in more than 32 other countries.
- Two fifth grade Destination Imagination Teams participated in the Regional Competition at Chelmsford High School in March. Team Rennert finished in fourth place in the Operation Cooperation Challenge, while team Rzepczynski finished third in the ViDlo Challenge. Team Rzepczynski received all of the 100 points rewarded in the Instant Challenge portion of the competition.
- Ten students from the METCO/Concord Family Friends Program participated in the Concord Ed Fund sponsored Photo Essays Project. The students gathered digital photos to create a photo essay of their lives. The students shared their Photo Essays at a School Committee meeting, an All-School Meeting, and a METCO Parent Coffee.
- At the Annual Turkey Trot, students ran 2,075 laps for a total of 519 miles to raise money for the Open Table, Concord Recreation Scholarship Fund, and the Boston Children's Pulmonary Unit to support children and families in need.
- 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. The bronze medal was awarded to the Festival Band for their performance
- Fourth grade students worked with an area scientist to raise baby Blanding and Snapper Turtles. Students collected weekly data, which consisted of measuring every turtle's length and weight and documenting their feeding behavior. The information was shared using Web 2.0 tools and entered on a spreadsheet in Google Docs. Classroom and field investigations were shared on a blog along with other students in the area. The students will release the turtles back into the wild in the spring.

- The Alcott Green Monsters, the student environmental club, continued its efforts to increase recycling at the school. The Green Monster teamed up with Terracycle to recycle juice pouches and Nabisco snack wrappers. Terracycle bought over 2,000 juice pouches from the Green Monsters. In addition, the students participated in the Water Conservation Challenge and reduced their water usage by 25%. The Green Monsters were one of the two most improved teams to demonstrate the largest reduction in water usage.
- Students in grades four and five participated in the Massachusetts Children's Book Award. The students reviewed thirteen of the books and voted for the Mysterious Benedict Society by Trenton Lee Stewart. The Bronson Award: Alcott's K – 3 Children's Choice Award gave students in the younger grades the chance to reviewed twenty-two books throughout the year. The students choose Never Take a Shark to the Dentist by Judi Barrett. A letter was sent to Ms. Barrett, and her reply was shared with the students.
- The annual Variety Show in June featured students and teachers singing, dancing, and playing instruments and raised \$4,324 to benefit children at the KidsFirst Program and Children's Island Program. The KidsFirst money was used to help rebuild the school library, at St. Mary's Elementary School in New Orleans that was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. The Children's Island Program helped students in the Argentina After School non-profit project.
- The fifth grade students participated in a Community Service Project in October. The students planted daffodil bulbs in designated areas at the Harvey Wheeler and Peter Buckley facilities.
- Over the summer, Bronson, Alcott's school mascot, traveled with students, their families, and staff around the globe. Pictures of Bronson were taken on the Great Wall of China, Israel, the Caribbean, and many places in the United States and Europe. A wall display in the main foyer documented the many places that Bronson traveled. The fourth grade students generated clues for the school-wide guessing game of "Where in the World is Bronson?" The student body received clues each day of the week and students guess where Bronson is located.

Thoreau School

- In October, Nanae, Japan dignitaries visited Concord and Thoreau. The festivities at Thoreau included a potluck breakfast, a formal exchange of business cards, and a whole school assembly honoring our visitors, and a Skyping session with Emi Kimura from the Nanae International Relations organization.
- Thoreau faculty established a Global Education Committee with representation from each grade level. The committee wrote a Concord Ed. Fund grant that was funded for \$10,000. The grant calls for CCHS students to work with CCHS educators to produce multi-media productions about a foreign culture. When ready, the CCHS students will present their productions to Thoreau students.
- The Thoreaugly Green Committee remains active and this fall placed three "trees" around the school. The trees were filled with leaves from faculty and students stating what each individual was doing to help the environment
- In the summer, Congresswoman Niki Tsongas visited Thoreau as one of her three stops during her "River Day." The recently created Assabet River Walk was highlighted, and served as the reception area for the congresswoman and presentations by Thoreau students who had participated in the creation of the River Walk.

- The Thoreau PTG was very active and continued to sponsor school events including Math Night, Bingo Night, Book Fair Night, the Thoreau Spelling Bee, the Cakewalk, and the Thoreau 5K Road Race.
- In the fall of 09 the first New Family Orientation was held prior to the Open House. The goal of this presentation was to provide families new to Thoreau with an overview of the curriculum and culture of Thoreau, and to answer questions from the parents.
- A Math Information Night was held in the fall with presentations from the Math Specialist and other Thoreau teachers. Our goal was to provide parents with a taste of the math experiences their children enjoy while at Thoreau, and to more thoroughly explain the goal of Investigations.
- An After School Physical Activity Program was established for students in grades two through five.

Willard School

- During 2009, in conjunction with the Library program, the entire 5th grade student population participated in the Massachusetts Book Award Program, a state wide reading incentive program. In order to participate, students are required to 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 fourth year of the student literary magazine, The Beanstalk. In the last school year, Willard School published two magazines. Willard students in grades 1-5 contributed to the writing. Fourth and fifth graders comprised The Beanstalk staff. They were involved in all aspects of the magazine and podcast production. Under the supervision of a few faculty advisors, students managed all phases of the magazine: selecting submissions, illustrating, editing, layout design, word processing, scanning, etc. The Beanstalk has motivated many Willard students to submit their writing (short stories, poems, book reviews, non-fiction) for publication. Through their participation as members of the magazine staff, students have developed a variety of skills including teamwork, organization, and decision-making.
- Members of the Beanpod produced two podcasts this year. During the podcasts, students shared poems, stories, factual information, and interviews with a listening audience that extends to the Willard community and the broader community via the Willard website. Podcasts promote the development of oral presentation skills, an important skill for lifelong learning. In addition, podcasts offer students an authentic reason to write and perform for a listening audience.
- All Willard students and staff gathered in mid June for a Goodbye Willard Assembly. This assembly was planned by the kindergarten staff and featured kindergarten students in a "starring" role. The students drew pictures of their favorite Willard places, rituals, and memories. These pictures were incorporated in a slide show.
- In June, Willard staff members packed up their instructional supplies and materials to prepare for the move to the new Willard. The materials were transported to a storage facility for the summer. Willard recycled much of its old furniture passing on furniture to

the district's Integrated Preschool, a community preschool, and to our sister city of San Marcos, Nicaragua.

- The Willard Earth Care Club completed its third year of activity. Comprised of students in grades 3 -5, this group of students is committed to leading "green" initiatives at Willard. Working with the PTG Green Team, they helped to implement another Litter Free Lunch Week in the spring. Working with teacher leaders, the Earth Care Club helped to carry out the year's initiative: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. This program encouraged students and staff to reduce the amount of paper used throughout the school by encouraging staff and students to use both sides of paper before recycling. Students from the Earth Care Club continued to lead the effort to measure the amount of recycling waste generated at Willard and celebrate the positive results.
- Willard students performed in a variety of musical events. The chorus was invited again to sing at the Town wide Martin Luther King celebration in January and did a fabulous job. They sang along with the Boston Children's Chorus. The Chorus also performed for parents on the evening of the Art Retrospective. String and band students performed at a few concerts, both at Willard and at a town wide performance. These opportunities provided students with valuable performance experience.
- Willard students and families participated in various outreach efforts during 2009. The most significant projects included a Food Drive in March, which benefited Open Table and Trick or Treating for UNICEF. Willard students and families also contributed school supplies to a school in Honduras and they contributed Halloween costumes to children in need. Participating in these outreach efforts fulfills a Willard School Advisory Council goal and provides students with rewarding opportunities to help others.
- Approximately 35 fourth and fifth grade students participated in the Math Olympiad during the 2008-2009 school year. About 40 % of the current fifth grade students are engaged in the Math Olympiad for 2009-2010. Under the direction of Willard's Math Specialist, students met weekly for several months to participate in this math enrichment opportunity. During the spring and fall of 2009, many Willard students participated in many activities that they accessed through the Willard School Math Website. They tried monthly math challenges and they explored links to a variety of math games and websites. All of these activities fostered logical thinking and problem solving.
- The Willard PTG sponsored several extracurricular activities: the Willard Spelling Bee, the Willard Science Fair, Family Math Night, and the Willard Talent Show. Each of these events afforded students the opportunity to demonstrate a variety of talents: academic, social, musical, and dramatic – to name a few.

Concord Middle School

- On the 2009 MCAS, 96% of eighth grade students scored Proficient or Advanced in English Language Arts.
- Eighth grade French and Spanish students participate in the National French and Spanish exams.
- CMS students participated in the National Geography Bee competition.
- Eight 6th and 7th graders participated in eight events at the Science Olympiad State Meet at Assumption College, placing second in the state in two (Elevated Bridge and Write it/Do it), and sixth place in two (Anatomy and Experimental Design).

- Inspired by her work with the Science Olympiad, a 7th grade student participated and was a state winner in the Discovery Education 3M Young Scientists Challenge.
- Seventh grade students visited the Museum of Fine Arts and conducted research integrating their study of Rome, Greece, India, China, or the Himalayas with the art of their chosen civilization.
- Eighth grade students integrated engineering with physics as they designed, built and tested water wheels.
- Eighteen CMS students traveled to China during April 2009 as part of the exchange with Sunshine Middle School.
- Eight students from France stayed with CMS families to share a language and cultural exchange. They attended classes at CMS and shared information about their lives.
- An eighth grade student broke the CMS record for the one-mile run in track and field.
- CMS boys soccer was undefeated for the third year
- CMS Girls field hockey experienced no losses in the fall season.
- More than 55 students performed as cast or crew in “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat” in April 2009.

A report of progress and accomplishments in the 2009 year at Concord-Carlisle High School follows.