

Concord School Committee
Pamela Gannon, Chair
Maureen Spada, Vice-Chair
Peter Fischelis
Fabian Fondriest
Jerry Wedge

The strong support of Concord citizens allows Concord Public Schools to provide a high quality education to every child in our community. The importance placed by the Concord community on education means that our schools can maintain high achievement levels, hire the very best teachers, introduce new curriculum and technology, and provide a safe and healthy environment for our students.

This year, we welcomed Maureen Spada as a new member of the school committee and Fabian Fondriest was re-elected to a second term. Jan McGinn retired after six years of serving on the school committee, and we appreciate her dedication and accomplishments during her tenure. We are grateful to have exemplary school leadership and an exceptional faculty and staff who make our schools among the top in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We appreciate all the parents and community members who volunteer their time on behalf of our schools. Most of all, we thank the citizens of Concord for their ongoing support of our schools.

In September, the school committee updated the district's mission statement and core values. The new statement reads: "The mission of the Concord Public Schools and the Concord-Carlisle Regional School District is to educate all students to become independent lifelong learners, creative thinkers, caring citizens, and responsible contributors to our increasingly diverse global society." The core values and beliefs are: academic excellence, empathic and respectful community, professional collaboration, educational equity, and continuous improvement. We use this vision to guide our decisions.

Concord Public Schools (CPS) serves 1918 students in grades K-8 and an additional 40 students in the integrated preschool program. CPS has experienced significant increases in enrollment since 2007, with the addition of at least 20 students per year. For the current school year 2010-11, the enrollment increased by 59 students in K-8. We opened a fifth kindergarten class at Willard to accommodate additional students. Our students continue to perform at the top of the state in standardized exams such as MCAS. Efforts are underway to address specific sub-groups that do not perform as well in these tests. However, the MCAS exams are only part of the assessments used by the district to monitor student progress. Our students also score well in enrichment activities such as math olympiad, math team, and the national French and Spanish exams. Most of our students also participate in instrumental music programs for strings, band, and chorus that are offered during the school day from 4th through 8th grades.

During these times of economic uncertainty, the school committee and school administration have made a concerted effort to develop budgets that meet the needs of our students and are respectful of the taxpayers. For the 2010-2011 budget, the school committee proposed the unprecedented budget increase of 0.0%. The previous year, we proposed an increase of 1.8%. Two major factors contributed to these minimal increases in the school budget. The school administration, through years of prudent and insightful management, was able to lower special education costs. By developing in-house programs, we were able to significantly decrease the expenditures for out-of-district placements. In addition, the school committee worked long and hard to negotiate a reasonable and sustainable contract with the Concord Teachers' Association in 2009. We are grateful that the K-8 teachers agreed to a cost-of-living adjustment that acknowledges the difficult economic times.

For 2011-2012, the school committee has approved a CPS budget with an increase of 2.8%, in line with the Concord Finance Committee guideline. As in all high-quality educational programs,

the majority of our budget goes to salaries for our teachers and staff. This budget meets the needs created by our increased enrollment and will be voted on at Town Meeting in April 2011. For the fifth year in a row, the school budget is within the levy limit and does not require a Proposition 2½ override. The technology stabilization fund created at the 2010 Town Meeting will help us manage significant future expenditures. For the 2011 Town Meeting, we are proposing additional funding for the CPS capital construction stabilization fund to lower tax levy impacts for CPS capital projects that will be needed in the future.

For past few years, we have been able to focus on improvements at Concord Middle School. Both Sanborn and Peabody have undergone capital projects to increase the safety and energy-efficiency of these buildings. The window replacement project is complete, replacing single-pane glass with double-pane insulated glass in both buildings. In the upcoming year, we plan to replace the boilers at both schools. In addition, the science labs were renovated and the Peabody play area improved. Drainage and paving issues were addressed at Sanborn and the play area will be improved there. Multi-year renovations have begun on the Sanborn auditorium.

The school committee made several policy updates to comply with state directives. An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools (Ch. 92 of the Acts of 2010) mandates that all schools develop a policy for bullying prevention and intervention. The policy committee and administration met several times and the full committee discussed these issues extensively. Work groups will further consider curriculum, parent communication and education, professional development, and cyber-bullying. Although CPS already has many programs in place to address issues related to bullying, the new plan sets out more concrete guidelines. In addition, surveys on school safety and climate were given to students, parents, faculty and staff. The results will be analyzed over the course of the year.

The school committee is dedicated to reducing the energy consumption of school buildings. With three new elementary schools, we have realized significant progress in this area. The new Alcott and Thoreau schools are each 50% larger than the old schools, but have the same energy consumption. The new, "green" Willard school, which has the same square footage as Thoreau and Alcott, uses 35% less gas for heating and 25% less electricity. In March, the Willard school was certified by MA-CHPS (The Collaborative for High Performance Schools) following a rigorous evaluation process. The letter commended Willard as an "excellent example of what a healthy, green, high performance school can be." In addition, using funding from Concord Municipal Light Plant, the Sawyer Trust, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Dept of Energy Resources, a solar panel array was installed on the roof of the Willard school. Extra-curricular programs in our schools help students learn about our environment and implement ways to preserve it. The Alcott Green Monsters, Thoreau Green, and Willard Earth Care Club help with reuse and recycling in their schools.

Our students are involved in many activities both inside and outside the classroom that expand their knowledge and participation in the local and the global communities. Students at Alcott raised money for Open Table and the Concord Recreation Scholarship Fund by running laps on the track, students at Thoreau learned about world cultures through presentations by CCHS students and provided lunch to the Council on Aging, and students at Willard learned about families living in Iraq and Afghanistan and collected donations for Pennies for Peace. In response to the earthquake in Haiti, students in the elementary schools sold pencils, designed and sold valentine's cards, and wore "Hats for Haiti" to raise money for UNICEF and other disaster-relief organizations. Concord Middle School (CMS) students visited China as part of an on-going exchange program, and students from China and France came to visit CMS. We are grateful to the teachers who facilitate these extracurricular activities and to the parents who support their students and the community.

The school committee is very interested in enhancing communication with citizens. School committee meetings are open to the public, and we encourage your attendance and participation. In addition, monthly superintendent teas allow parents and community members to meet in an

informal setting with our Superintendent of Schools, Diana Rigby. The district web site (www.concordpublicschools.net) contains updated information on school events and meetings.