

Annual Town Report 2011
Concord Public Schools
Concord-Carlisle Regional School District
Superintendent's Report

Diana F. Rigby, Superintendent
John Flaherty, Deputy Sup. Of Finance and Operations
Kathy Codianne, Director of Teaching and Learning
Kelly McCausland, Director of Human Resources
Jessica Murphy, Director of Special Education
Gene Warfel, Director of Information Technology
Peter Badalament, Concord-Carlisle Principal
Lynne Beattie, Concord Middle School Principal
Kelly Clough, Thoreau Principal
Patricia Fernandes, Willard Principal
Sharon Young, Alcott Principal

The mission of the Concord Public Schools and the Concord-Carlisle Regional School District is to educate all students to become lifelong learners, creative thinkers, caring citizens, and responsible contributors to our increasingly diverse global society. We are able to achieve our mission through the investment of educators, staff, parents, and community members who work hard to improve our schools.

DISTRICT GOALS

Every school year, the administration develops district goals for the Concord Public Schools (CPS) and the Concord-Carlisle Regional School District (CCRSD) which are approved by the School Committees. We focus on efforts to improve student learning by using common formative assessments to monitor student progress, teaching critical creative, and self-regulated thinking skills, increasing the integration of digital tools, incorporating college and career readiness skills in current instructional practices, expanding curricular programs in the arts, engineering, and environmental science, and implementing strategies to promote caring and kindness. The goals also specify improvements in parent communication, teacher collaboration, professional development, and teacher evaluation. In addition, we strive for prudent management of school budgets, resources, and capital projects.

STUDENT LEARNING

All district efforts focus on improving student learning. Elementary (grades K-5) principals, curriculum specialists, and teachers worked together to monitor individual student progress in reading, writing, and math. Progress monitoring data was collected and reviewed for those students who required additional instruction and remediation. Fastmath and math software were used as additional resources for math skill practice. Multiple literacy assessments for fluency, decoding, vocabulary development, and comprehension provided progress monitoring for reading benchmarks. Targeted skill instruction was provided for students reading below grade level. The Foundations phonology program was piloted in some kindergarten classrooms with success. In grades 4 and 5, students used ePals as an online writing tool. Elementary science programs were enriched with the addition of the Analemma project at Willard, the Penguin project at Thoreau, the Mars Rover project at Thoreau, and the grade 4 Blanding's Turtle project at all the elementary schools. A highlight was the second place finish in the Disney Planet Challenge for community advocacy for the Blanding's Turtles by Mrs. Erikson's fourth grade class.

At Concord Middle School (CMS), the Principal and teachers developed and implemented a framework for teaching critical, creative, and self-regulated thinking skills to help middle school students become successful independent learners. These critical thinking skills have been explicitly emphasized within classroom instruction. CMS math teachers developed and implemented common

formative assessments to monitor individual student progress. Focused and intensive math classes were implemented four periods per week to assist students who are struggling with math concepts. Social studies teachers worked with the library media specialists to incorporate Noodle tools software into the middle school research projects. In addition, FIRST Lego Robotics was added to extracurricular offerings, and ten students participated in the State Championship and won an award for teamwork.

The entire CMS community participated in CMS Stands Together, three days of bullying prevention and intervention education in November. All staff members were trained and involved in instruction. Five staff members developed the curriculum through the summer and fall and provided training for all middle school teachers. Additionally, fifty-seven 8th graders gave up their lunchtime and afterschool time to participate as student leaders on the CMS Stand Together committee. They worked with each other to facilitate the November event. They led house huddles to introduce anti-bullying ideas to 6th, 7th, and 8th graders, solicited questions for a high school panel to answer, wrote and delivered speeches, met with guest speakers, and served as positive, caring role models.

At Concord-Carlisle High School, (CCHS) new courses developed this year include Organic Chemistry, Advanced Earth Science and Physical Geology, and Geologic Mapping and Engineering. The new Engineering Certificate program was launched for those students enrolled in a minimum of five electives in engineering and technology while maintaining a high level of rigor in math and science courses. English, social studies, and special education teachers worked together to develop and implement common assessments. Honors programs in English were offered for freshmen and sophomores. At the beginning of the school year, all freshmen participated in a technology orientation course to become familiar with their First Class, X2, and Moodle accounts. Three hundred students and teachers use the Moodle site on a daily basis. Students use digital tools to access online course work, check email conference folders for class and school information, contribute to wiki forum discussions, and work with a variety of web-based platforms. Information literacy classes taught by the library media specialist instructed all students in advanced web searches, source evaluation, citation and web-based tools for collaborating, synthesizing and sharing work. Twenty-five students participated in Virtual High School classes, and the principal, guidance counselor, and students were featured on the VHS showcase panel for state legislators. Thirty Biology students participated in the Environmental Field Studies project to protect Blanding's turtles. The Robotics Team built an amazing robot to successfully compete in the FIRST competition at WPI. The CCHS Meteorology students and teacher presented at a National Meteorology conference in Seattle.

At the district level, district administrators, principals, department chairs, and K5 curriculum specialists participated in the Instructional Rounds (IR) process to increase teacher collaboration by examining the evidence of student learning. The K12 instructional leadership team worked hard to develop a shared understanding of what high quality teaching and learning looks like in CPS and CCHS through classroom observations, reflections, discussions, and recommendations.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Our students continue to achieve at high levels. The 2011 Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) results were strong with ninety-percent of 5th grade students scoring advanced or proficient on the ELA MCAS, 87% scoring advanced or proficient on the Math MCAS, and 81% scoring advanced or proficient on the Science MCAS. Ninety-three percent of 8th grade students scored proficient or advanced on the ELA MCAS.

Ninety-seven percent of 10th grade students scored proficient or advanced on the ELA MCAS and ninety-four percent scored proficient or advanced on the Math MCAS. Ninety-four percent of 10th grade students passed one of the Science MCAS. One hundred percent of the CCHS class of 2011 received a Competency Determination as a result of passing both the ELA and Math MCAS.

The median SAT score for CCHS Class 2011 was 1860 (with 1526 as the State average). Twelve students in the Class of 2011 qualified as National Merit semifinalists and three National Merit

Scholarships were ultimately awarded. Ninety-seven percent of Advanced Placement (AP) exams taken by CCHS students received a passing score, and overall 83% of AP exams were scored at a 4 or 5 (the highest score). The average number of CCHS graduates planning to continue their education in post-secondary placements exceeded 95%. In a survey of graduating seniors, 63% reported they were admitted to their 1st college choice and 20% were admitted to their 2nd college choice.

In the elementary schools, Grade 5 students participated in the national Mathematical Olympiad program, and almost all participants finished in the top 50%. The CMS Math Team placed 3rd in the DaVinci Division of the New England Math League. The team is comprised of students in grades 6-8, and competed against five other local competitive middle schools. CMS students placed in the top twenty of more than 100 schools in the Metrowest Regional Math Counts competition. Eight 6th and 7th grade students participated in eight events at the Science Olympiad State Meet at Assumption College, placing second in the state in two events and sixth place in two different events. Students also competed in December at the Boston University Academy First Lego League Competition. The team's robot competed in four rounds and finished 21st of more than 35 teams in attendance. Seventy-three French and Spanish students participated in the National Language Exams, and several students were among the top scorers in the state. More than 60 students performed as cast or crew in "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" in April 2011.

Elementary students participated in a number of community outreach programs: 1,000 cranes project for Japan relief at Alcott, collecting supplies for soldiers in Afghanistan at Alcott and Willard, creating Kids Bags for Open Table at Alcott and the annual food drive at Willard which generated 69 bags of food for Open Table, raising money for Gaining Ground at Thoreau, and providing lunch, gifts, and entertainment for Council on Aging at Thoreau.

Eighteen 7th grade students traveled to China during April as part of the annual exchange with Sunshine Middle School in Xian, China. Students and teachers from France stayed with CMS families to share a cultural exchange. The CMS Student Leaders organized a number of community service efforts including collecting donations for Haiti and Japan relief funds, Coats for Kids, UNICEF, and Buddy Dog Animal Shelter.

At CCHS, students demonstrated their commitment to social responsibility through participation in numerous activities, by raising funds to aid relief efforts in Japan, by participating in the Ecuador, Turkmenistan, Japan, and France Exchanges, and by hosting Turkmenistan visitors. In the summer of 2012, students will travel to Tanzania to perform community service in remote areas. More students received the Global Literacy Certificate which recognizes those students who think globally, improve their world language skills, and are able to communicate effectively with people across cultural and language borders. Locally, our students committed over 10,000 hours of service to the surrounding communities during the school year. The volunteer work and community service done by the young people of Boston, Carlisle, and Concord are evidence that students have internalized the core values of CCHS and the district.

These activities and achievements are only a sampling of the wide range of student programs and projects at Alcott, Thoreau, and Willard elementary schools, CMS, and CCHS. For more information, visit the district website (www.concordpublicschools.net) or individual school websites.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

The Special Education Departments of Concord Public Schools and the Concord –Carlisle Regional School District are dedicated to providing quality services and programs for students with disabilities preschool through age 22. The continued goals of the special education departments are to meet the needs of the students with diverse learning, medical, cognitive and social disabilities within their local community. We strive to continue to decrease the number of students who are serviced in out-of-district placements. Additionally, we recognize that students with disabilities are part of a family unit.

We work to support the families of our students through the special education process and work toward their post-secondary goals.

The Concord Integrated Preschool has finished the first year of the full day classroom! It has been a great start to the second year, and the students who have typically needed a separate setting are now able to remain in their home district. We have experienced a tremendous increase in the number of children with significant needs transitioning to CPS from Early Intervention. This increase in special education is a nationwide trend and research shows that there is a tremendous increase in students entering the schools with medical, physical, language and social delays. Much of this is attributed to the gains in medical intervention and care of premature babies. In Concord, we have added a second morning session of the integrated preschool to meet the increasing needs of the special education children.

At the K-8 level, we have continued to improve our math instruction at all levels. At the Middle School we have added an Intensive Math class and Intensive English class at the Sanborn Building. The elementary students with significant learning needs made good progress in their special day classes in the elementary schools and are now working hard to remain in Peabody and Sanborn with special education support.

AT CCHS, the Pathways Program continues to improve and students who have required out of district placements in Middle School have successfully transitioned to CCHS. We continue to look for ways to differentiate instruction at all grade levels so that regardless of ability or disability, all students are included and are accessing the curriculum, instruction, and technology.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The district continued to invest considerable resources in professional development providing educators with technology training in ActivInspire software and Moodle. During the 2010-2011 school year, 86 teachers took advantage of ActivInspire training and 25 teachers were trained to use Moodle. Additionally, we began to pilot the use of iPads as a tool for teaching and learning.

During the summer there were sixteen elementary curriculum development projects, sixteen middle school curriculum development projects, and twenty curriculum development projects at CCHS. K-5 projects included work at grades three through five to develop common math assessments and mapping the curriculum in art, music and science. At the Middle School, teachers also worked on curriculum mapping in ELA, science, social studies and foreign language. Middle school teachers also created a bullying prevention and intervention curriculum, "CMS Stands Together." At CCHS, curriculum mapping was included in all the summer curriculum development projects and new courses were created in Electrical Engineering and Earth Science. Also, during the summer, 13 foreign language teachers in grades 6-12 participated in Designing Dynamic Foreign Language units.

To address the need for professional development in bullying prevention and intervention, teachers and students produced an online training module for all employees of the Concord Public Schools and Concord Carlisle Regional School District.

HUMAN RESOURCES

In 2011 seven faculty and staff members retired after many years of dedicated service. The teachers that retired were Alcott's librarian Sandy Peirce after 25-years of service, CPS music teacher Robert Seely after 11 years of service, and CCHS math teacher Lee Coopridier after 10 years of service. The support staff members that retired were: Betty Kelley a 48-year food service employee at CCHS; David Eddy a 45-year building service worker at CCHS; Jane Ross a 24-year Ripley district accountant and Ann Fossett a 22-year Willard library assistant. The school community grieved the loss of two beloved members of our staff in 2011: CCHS photography teacher David Prifti after 25 years of service and Concord Middle School library assistant Amy Osgood after 4 years of service.

The districts hired seven teachers at CCHS, five teachers at CMS, eight elementary (PK – 5) teachers, and twenty-five staff members. The majority of the new faculty and staff members filled vacancies created by retirements, resignations, and leaves of absence. The districts have significant mentoring programs to ensure that new faculty members swiftly and substantively become part of the learning communities.

The Human Resources office began professional development with administrators regarding the new Massachusetts regulations on educator evaluation. Meetings with the teachers unions continued with a focus on the development of a new teacher supervision and evaluation system that complies with the new state regulations. A wellness initiative for all employees involved partnering with Emerson Hospital's new Integrative Health & Wellness Center. Successful negotiations with the K-12 secretaries resulted in a new three-year contract. This year the human resources office reduced its staffing because of efficiencies realized as the result of automation.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The infusion of technologies in the classrooms has dramatically increased the productivity and technical proficiency of both teachers and students. This year we added iPad carts as an additional digital tool to enhance student learning. Teachers continue to use First Class websites, wikis, blogs, and Moodle to engage students in their learning in a safe and controlled digital environment. Teachers design lessons that encourage students to demonstrate their content knowledge using digital tools such as multimedia projects, podcasts, presentations, and written assignments.

Every teacher uses an ActivBoard for interactive teaching and learning. New multi-radio Xirus wireless hubs have been installed throughout the schools to meet the growing need for web-based tools. Five-year-old computers were replaced according to the replacement cycle and multi-year tech plan. A new management tool, CASPER, was purchased to manage the MAC OS X devices and the IOS devices, iPads and iPods.

At CCHS, the full-time Technology Specialist provided instructional coaching for the integration of digital tools in the classroom. The full-time supervisor in the Digital Recording Studio, Colonial Sound, dramatically increased the opportunities for students to work and record in the studio. Students work on projects, and every day the recording studio is booked for student recordings. The X2 Aspen portal has been improved for communication with parents and students, providing access to attendance, assignments, schedule information, and grades.

FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

The districts continue to maintain excellent academic programs in an economic climate that remains challenging. State aid levels have not kept pace with increasing system costs, and along with increased enrollments in the elementary schools, a new dimension of early childhood special education costs emerged. While our core budget development operating principle of focusing all resources of the school districts to support student learning and growth remains unchanged, an increasing portion of FY2012 resources necessarily shifted towards obligations in our early education program. The district goals approved by the school committees identified priorities and continue to inform the budget process. Recognizing the emerging district needs and the finite funding resources of each town, the district administration and school committees worked closely with the finance committees and selectmen to develop responsible FY2012 budgets during 2011.

The FY2012 budgets represented a 2.8% increase in the Concord Public Schools appropriation above the FY2010 appropriation which remained unchanged for FY2011. The operating budget for the Concord-Carlisle Regional School District increased 3.84% above the FY2011 level. The CPS and CCRSD budget requests were below levy limits; matched guidelines developed by the Concord and Carlisle Finance Committees, and for the fifth consecutive year did not require overrides. While

the school districts each managed successful year-end closings, CPS will not be seeking town approval for adding to the CPS Capital Construction Stabilization and CPS Technology Stabilization funds as in previous years. All CPS operating funds were consumed in addressing FY2011 costs. The Regional School District did not experience new special education costs and will be seeking approval from both Concord and Carlisle to place approximately \$250,000 into the RSD Technology Stabilization Fund. The Regional School District's Excess and Deficiency (E&D) fund balance for the past fiscal year has been maintained above the 4.7% level. The AAA bond rating has been maintained and the negative outlook assigned by Moody's Investors Service in response to national financial conditions was recently removed.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

The major capital project highlights of 2011 included securing a \$28 million commitment from the State for reimbursement for the CCHS building project and signing a project funding agreement with the Massachusetts School Building Authority. The Towns of Concord and Carlisle also approved the Regional School Committees' debt authorization of \$92,578,524. The Regional School District is very grateful for the positive voter support at Town Meeting and the polls.

The capital projects at CPS include improvement of the Sanborn playgrounds, reconfiguring the Sanborn's bus drop-off and pick-up area, upgraded parking area at the Peabody building, upgraded electrical service at the Ripley building, initiating phase one of the Ripley conference room project, and completion of the Ripley front entrance parking area redesign.

SUMMARY

The major highlight of 2011 was the overwhelming support at the Concord and Carlisle Town Meetings and polls for the new high school building project. With the assistance of the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) the new high school will be built on the site behind the current high school. We are extremely grateful for the Concord and Carlisle communities' support, and we look forward to opening a new high school in Fall 2015.

The districts also made significant progress in achieving the mission and district goals by increasing student learning, improving special education services, integrating technology into the classrooms, supporting faculty and staff, and developing responsive and responsible budgets. For more information, please visit the districts' website, www.concordpublicschools.net, and review the CPS & CCRSD 2011 Performance Report.