

**JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES Concord-Carlisle School Committee
Concord School Committee
March 11, 2025**

Present: Alexa Anderson, Vice Chair CCSC; CSC
Carrie Rankin, Chair CSC; CCSC
Brian Waterson, CCSC
Cynthia Rainey, CSC; CCSC
Ayesha Lawton, CSC METCO Rep

Not Present: Julie Viola, Chair; CCSC
Andrew Herchek, CSC; CCSC
Tracey Marano, CSC; CCSC

Present from Administration: Dr. Laurie Hunter, Superintendent of School, CPS & CCRSD
Robert Conry, Asst. Supt. of Finance & Operations, CPS & CCRSD
Shelly Chin, Interim Assistant Superintendent, CPS & CCRSD

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Anderson called the Concord-Carlisle School Committee (CCSC) to order at 6:00 PM.
Ms. Rankin called the Concord School Committee (CSC) to order at 6:00 PM.

II. CCHS STUDENT UPDATE

CCHS student representative Felicity Zhang presented the committee with an update on academic and extracurricular highlights at the high school. The school has hosted numerous community-based events including the multicultural food festival; a record-breaking phone-a-thon that raised \$24,000 for the CCHS scholarship fund; and the MMA junior district festival for ninth graders who excel in band, orchestra, and chorus. There are also many ongoing events including the Moot court competition and the kickoff to spring sports season.

Some upcoming events at CCHS are an informative fentanyl education assembly; a school spirit dodgeball tournament; the inaugural CCHS wellness week; a preview concert for the Micah competition; and the rescheduled IQ age fest. Finally, CCHS Wellness Week is scheduled for March 17th through the 21st and includes wellness activities for staff, flex block options for students, and wellness tables during lunch breaks.

III. RECOGNITIONS

A. CCHS River and Revolutions
Ashley Cohane, a math teacher and the program leader, presented on the Rivers and Revolutions program, highlighting its unique role in addressing student stress and anxiety by grounding them in experiential learning. The program started twelve years ago, aims for 50% of its activities to occur outside the classroom, emphasizes interdisciplinary collaboration and focuses on themes like place, community, and living deliberately. Recently, honors courses were embedded, allowing students to balance AP classes with the program,

and there is a renewed focus on curriculum cohesion. The program has seen a resurgence in interest, now attracting around 23% of the graduating class, due to efforts to make it more accessible and relevant to a wider range of students, while maintaining its experiential and collaborative core. The team actively manages technology use, fostering authentic connections among students by limiting cell phone access during activities.

B. CCHS Girls Swim State Champions

Coaches Goldberg and Moss were celebrated for leading the girls' swim and dive team to their second consecutive state championship, with the boys' team also achieving a strong fourth-place finish. The coaches highlighted the team's depth, breaking four school records, and the individual state championships won by Maisie O'Donnell and Sarah Fortier. Beyond their athletic achievements, the coaches emphasized the team's exceptional character, citing a heartwarming birthday surprise as an example. The school acknowledged the inclusive and supportive culture fostered by the coaches and team captains, emphasizing its importance over athletic victories and recognizing it as a shining example of the school's values.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mark Drometti of Wright Road Concord, MA was born in Brockton and is the father of Jewish students. He expressed his concern over ongoing incidents of anti-Semitism, racism, homophobia, and misogyny at CCHS following a school field trip in May 2024. He feels that school leadership responses were dismissive, with a pattern of "running out the clock" rather than addressing the root issues. He has experienced discrimination, and his children have faced security threats due to their Jewish identity, highlighting the need for a comprehensive, community-wide solution. He pointed to the local Jewish community's task force, State Representative Cataldo's committee, and the successful anti-Semitism initiatives in the Acton-Boxborough district as resources the school can utilize. He referenced the Emerson Youth Risk Behavior Survey, which indicated rising bullying, depression, and gun possession among students, emphasizing the urgent need for meaningful action to create a safe and inclusive school environment.

Dave Nicholson and Laura Well of Old Marlboro Road Concord, MA. expressed concerns about the Thoreau playground project, despite acknowledging the efforts of Principal Sparks, the Thoreau PTG, and the Thoreau's Backyard Committee. They expressed concern that the current design, primarily featuring wood chips, fails to meet ADA standards for wheelchair accessibility and undermines the project's goal of inclusivity. They stated they previously raised these concerns and offered detailed recommendations based on wheelchair users' experiences but had not been included in the committee. They emphasized that the playground's design could either foster inclusion or perpetuate segregation and ableism, urging the school committee to ensure the playground honors the town's values and the fundraising commitments made for an inclusive experience for all children.

Nancy Brown, 96 Forest Ridge Road, Concord, MA and co-chair of the DEIB committee expressed concern about the challenging times and the impact on Concord, citing incidents of discrimination within schools. While acknowledging the positive aspects of living in Concord, she emphasized that the town is not immune to national issues. She urged the superintendent and school committee to resist these negative forces and offered the DEIB commission's support in navigating these difficult times.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Joint Minutes 2.4.25

B. Warrants

1.	CCRS D A/P		
	1204	2/27/25	\$250,978.24
	1205	3/5/25	\$68,399.17
2.	CPS Payroll		
	Pay date	2/27/25	\$380,630.41
	Pay date	2/27/25	\$245,841.61
	Pay date	2/27/25	\$1,697.59
3.	CCRS D Payroll		
	Pay date	2/27/25	\$15,742.96
	Pay date	2/27/25	\$624,009.60
	Pay date	2/27/25	\$75,762.82
	Pay date	2/27/25	\$178,122.96
	Pay date	2/27/25	\$43,339.08

Mr. Waterson moved, and Ms. Rankin seconded the motion to accept the Consent Agenda as presented. Roll was taken Anderson, aye; Rainey, aye; Rankin, aye; Waterson, aye.

VI. CORRESPONDENCE

CPS and CCRSD received multiple emails on cellphone use in school.

VII. SUPERINTENDENT, CHAIRS, AND LIAISONS UPDATE

Dr. Hunter highlighted several recent events: a speaker on equity at CPAC; the inaugural AI committee meeting; the soft opening of the Concord retail store, where signage and last-minute details are being finalized; and the first public event and home game for the unified basketball team in the middle school new gymnasium. While the shelter had vacant rooms, the state relocated families from Waltham there, and the district anticipates 15-16 new students. Finally, demolition of the Sanborn building is scheduled to begin next week.

Ms. Rankin reported that the cell phone policy is under discussion in the policy subcommittee before being presented to the school committee. The school committee is collaborating with MASC to develop an updated school committee evaluation, aiming for alignment with their goals and broader stakeholder participation. Regarding the Thoreau playground, fundraising has reached the final phase, with \$454,000 raised, representing 74% of the goal. She acknowledged the Nicholson's feedback on the playground's design but emphasized that the project is currently in the fundraising phase, not the design phase. Schematic designs are used to support fundraising efforts, while the final design will be determined by the funds raised.

Ayesha Lawton shared the last committee meeting was in Boston and an Alcott parent is very interested in the school committee METCO Representative seat.

Mr. Waterson reported that the Campus Completion team is shifting its focus from warrant articles to a marketing plan aimed at communicating with both communities. This plan

includes developing a set of FAQs for various platforms, such as the website. A key question being addressed is why Concord did not apply for CPA funds before the April and September deadlines. A draft of the FAQs, which includes responses to this question, is being finalized and will be circulated by the end of the week.

VIII. DISCUSSION

A. Ripley STEAM Lab Overview

Shelly Chin presented a brief overview of the Ripley STEAM Lab, highlighting its inquiry-based approach to STEM education for pre-K through 6th grade. The curriculum emphasizes hands-on learning, collaboration, and the development of critical thinking skills. CPS is fortunate to have a large lab that allows students to engage deeply with STEM standards from kindergarten through 6th grade. The lab combines engineering, science, communication, problem-solving, and experimentation. STEAM lab educators have developed and created STEM-based, developmentally appropriate projects. Students build upon the knowledge they acquire in the lab and apply it in STEM and other classes. By 3rd grade, the curriculum incorporates research, becoming STREAM.

B. Superintendent Goal Update

Dr. Hunter outlined her progress on 2024-25 goals, emphasizing data-driven improvements across instruction, equity, and student well-being. Notable initiatives include the rollout of knowledge-based ELA programs; DEIB initiatives; refined special education services; and enhanced METCO support. A significant focus was placed on staff culture, with concerns raised about teacher burnout due to increasing demands, prompting a call for community understanding and support. Additionally, she addressed the complexities of managing the homeless shelter and the challenges of providing consistent summer programs for its transient residents, while also detailing ongoing work in finance, operations, and the new middle school's transition.

C. School Committee Goals

Ms. Anderson presented the School Committee Goals tracker and asked Ms. Rankin to provide an update on the "Story of the Schools" community outreach program. This program, a goal currently marked as "on pace but incomplete," is being developed by the subcommittee. Ms. Rankin reported that the subcommittee initially planned to create a professionally designed document for community mailing. However, due to budget constraints, they have revised their approach. The subcommittee will now produce a printed document for distribution at the Carlisle town meeting on May 18th, while Concord's distribution plan is still being developed. The subcommittee is scheduled to meet again on Friday to continue work on the project. Additionally, they are collaborating with M.A.S.C. to revise and broaden the scope of their annual evaluation.

D. Superintendent Evaluation

The Superintendent Evaluation is conducted biennially. One chair will participate, and the committee requested a volunteer, preferably someone with prior evaluation experience, to join the subcommittee as a member. The evaluation process involves averaging individual evaluations based on DESE standards, focusing on those standards relevant to the Superintendent's goals. The subcommittee will compile qualitative data, using direct quotes to ensure all voices are represented without editorialization.

Ms. Viola will represent the Chairs and Ms. Anderson volunteered to be part of the committee who must complete the evaluation by May 2025.

IX. ACTION ITEMS

There were no Action Items on the agenda.

X. EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Executive Session was postponed to the next meeting to allow more committee members to participate.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Anderson moved, and Ms. Rankin seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:35 PM. Roll was taken: Anderson, aye; Rainey, aye; Rankin, aye; Waterson, aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Gilmore

Approved: March 25, 2025

Abbreviations:

CCHS Concord-Carlisle High School
CCRSD Concord-Carlisle Regional School District
CCSC Concord-Carlisle Regional District School Committee
CCTA Concord-Carlisle Teachers' Association
CEF Concord Education Fund
CMS Concord Middle School
CMSBC Concord Middle School Building Committee
COAR Communities Organizing Against Racism
CPC Community Preservation Committee
CPS Concord Public Schools
CSC Concord School Committee
CTA Concord Teachers Association
DEIB Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging
DHCB Department of Housing and Community Development
ESSER Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund
FINCOM Finance Committee
LEAP Learning Executive and Academic Processes
MTSS Multi-Tiered System of Supports
PD Professional Development
SC School Committee
SEPAC Special Education Parent Advisory Council
WRAP Writing, Reading, and Academic Processes
YRBS Youth Risk Behavior Survey