

The School Committees Report: Challenge Success, Grand Opening of Concord PossAbilities

Challenge Success

CCHS Co-Principals Brian Miller and Katie Stahl attended the latest School Committees meeting to engage with member regarding Challenge Success at CCHS. The discussion included data from the latest student survey as well as an update on current approaches and the next steps.

Challenge Success is a non-profit that collaborates with school systems with the goal of implementing strategies that promote balance between academic achievement and reducing student stress and promoting student mental health as well as a sense of belonging and engagement. Its work is based on research from Stanford University. CCHS has been partnering with Challenge Success since 2016, and it is one of more than 720 schools that partner with the organization. Student surveys go back to 2015-2016, which allows the district and school site leaders to track progress on key issues and evaluate the success of different strategies to help students.

Based on survey data, CCHS leaders in 2022 began to focus on three priorities that included: a well-balanced schedule, creating a caring, collaborative, and respectful school community, and a strong sense of resilience and coping skills. Some of the strategies implemented by school leaders included efforts to reduce the amount of homework, working to ensure that every student felt that they had at least one adult they could turn to if they had a personal problem, creating a new daily schedule that includes a flex block, an adjusted schedule for mid-terms that has reading days and make-up exams, Fun Fridays, and a Belonging Film Project.

As a result of these efforts, student responses on the most recent survey from October 2024 showed improvements from previous surveys in several key areas such as student stress, engagement, sense of belonging, the amount of time doing homework on a nightly basis, and more sleep per night. While pleased with progress to date, Miller and Stahl told the Committee that there is more work to be done for students particularly as it relates to traditionally marginalized groups including LGBTQ, non-binary/gender queer, and students of color.

For next steps, CCHS leaders and students will consider suggestions from students in the survey such as no homework on weekends/school breaks, having teachers coordinate due dates for major projects and assessments, and creating more opportunities for more hands-on learning/active learning, such as real-world projects and role plays, and debates.

Concord PossAbilities

The Concord-Carlisle Regional School Committee celebrated the grand opening of Concord PossAbilities, a retail storefront for the District's Special Education Transition Program, commonly referred to as the Launch Program. This is a program that supports 18–22-year-old individuals who are moving on from high school to enter a work setting and/or a post-graduate education program in a safe and supportive environment. The program provides students with relevant work and life skills through a proficiency based academic model.

The retail storefront supports the Districts' goal to improve outcomes for special education students by providing them with in-district instruction and opportunities. This practice has improved student experiences while avoiding costly out of district tuition payments. District leaders have been contacted by other school systems in the area who have interest in exploring if they can provide access to the Launch Program for their students; if this occurs, it would help offset the cost of the lease and Launch Program for the Concord-Carlisle School Region.

The space is located at 199 Sudbury Road in Concord and is open for business Monday-Friday between 9:00 AM and 2:15 PM.

Upcoming School Committee Meetings:

April 10,	6pm	Joint School Committee Meeting, Carlisle Town Hall
April 30,	6pm	Joint School Committee Meeting, Ripley Building

Zoom links are available on the District website: www.concordps.org.