

JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

**Concord-Carlisle School Committee
Concord School Committee
March 25, 2025**

Present: Julie Viola, Chair CCSC
Alexa Anderson, Vice Chair CCSC; CSC
Brian Waterson, CCSC
Carrie Rankin, Chair CSC; CCSC
Andrew Herchek, CSC; CCSC
Tracey Marano, CSC; CCSC
Cynthia Rainey, CSC; CCSC
Ayesha Lawton, CSC METCO Rep

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 Regional School Committee (CCSC) to order at 6:00 PM. Ms. Rankin called the Concord School Committee (CSC) to order at 6:00 PM. Roll call was taken: Anderson, aye; Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Rainey, aye; Rankin, aye; Waterson, aye.

Ms. Anderson convened the public hearing to discuss participation in the state's School Choice Program, which allows students to attend schools outside their resident districts. Following a brief discussion, Dr. Hunter recommended that the committee vote against participating in the School Choice Program for the 2025-2026 school year. Her recommendation is based on the current enrollment numbers, which indicate school buildings are near capacity, and the absence of an equitable and adequate transportation system to ensure all students could participate in the program.

Ms. Marano moved, and Mr. Herchek seconded the motion to that the Concord School Committee and Concord-Carlisle Regional School District Committee vote to not participate in School Choice for the school year 2025-2026. Roll call was taken: Anderson, aye; Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Rainey, aye; Rankin, aye; Waterson, aye.

II. CCHS STUDENT UPDATE

Maddie Clancy and Zariah Alves shared the recent and upcoming events and activities at the high school including the successful IQH Fest; the Inter-School Tenacity Challenge; and a student organized blood drive that benefitted Boston Children's Hospital. Wellness Week also kicked off with fun and diverse activities including Tai Chi, Hoops for Hearts, a hydration station, wellness activities, and Fun Friday celebrations with student bands. Students benefited from two very informative events: the Alumni Panel, featuring alumni sharing their career stories, and the DESE-METCO meeting. The school is now preparing for the end of the academic quarter this Friday, and seniors are about to start their internships for the rest of the school year.

III. RECOGNITIONS

The CCHS boys and girls ski teams ended the season with impressive results, including junior Theo Remington who took first place. Theo recounted his season for the committee, detailing his league victory and unexpected success at the state championship held at Berkshire East in Western Massachusetts. Theo described the unusually warm and wet conditions during the race and praised the Concord-Carlisle Alpine team's success, noting both the boys' and girls' teams had a second-place finish behind St. John's Prep.

The CCHS Science Olympiad team, led by advisors Miss Moss and Mr. Panucci, was recognized for their significant achievements, including a first-place victory at the Dartmouth College National Invitational and an 11th-place state ranking. The team, which has grown substantially from its humble beginnings, attributes its success to hard work, strong leadership, and a dedicated team spirit. Their commitment, marked by weekly meetings and weekend sacrifices, has enabled them to excel in diverse STEM events, showcasing exceptional organizational skills and dedication.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Colleen Walston, 1 Hawthorne Village, Concord MA addressed the school district's literacy program, specifically Dr. Hunter's endorsement of the program following a talk by Kareem Weaver. Ms. Walston asserted the district has an imbalanced literacy approach, rather than evidence-based structured literacy, and feels resources are misallocated on ineffective products and training. She criticized the district's lack of transparency, its failure to improve MCAS scores for underperforming subgroups, and its continued use of Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI), which she argued promotes word guessing. Ms. Walston requested the discontinuation of LLI; the district to pursue grant opportunities for superior curricula; the district consult with independent literacy experts for all literacy decisions; and she emphasized the need of transparency and comprehensive professional development.

2. Betsy Olsson-Mackowski of 1741 Wedgewood Common, Concord, MA, expressed concerns regarding the rail trail's connection to the new middle school. She advocated for a fully ADA-compliant path, emphasizing its equitable nature, safety, and accessibility for all residents. She argued that an ADA-accessible path would be an equitable, long-term infrastructure investment benefiting the entire town. She also raised concerns about the inequity of reading scores within the district, citing the struggles of numerous families and reiterated Ms. Walston's concerns about the reading score disparities and the challenges faced by families.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Joint Minutes February 26, 2025
- B. Joint Minutes March 11, 2025
- C. Approve May 5, 2025, as Half-Day for Concord Integrated Preschool (CPS)
- D. Accept the Donation of a Grand Piano to CMS (CPS)
- E. Warrants
 - 1. CPS A/P

1094	3/13/25	\$43,183.88
1095	3/13/25	\$428,547.41
 - 2. CCRSD A/P

1216	2/24/25	\$134,275.00
1217	3/10/25	\$1,593,312.50
3. CPA Payroll		
Pay date	3/13/25	\$918.43
Pay date	3/13/25	\$223,782.49
Pay date	3/13/25	\$2,109.20
Pay date	3/13/25	\$364,654.36
4. CRSD Payroll		
Pay date	3/13/25	\$68,258.55
Pay date	3/13/25	\$2,883.33
Pay date	3/13/25	\$18,268.21
Pay date	3/13/25	\$5,795.70
Pay date	3/13/25	\$616,742.32
Pay date	3/13/25	\$75,472.08
Pay date	3/13/25	\$177,062.81
Pay date	3/13/25	\$44,607.56

Ms. Waterson moved, and Mr. Herchek seconded the motion to approve the consent agenda as presented. Roll call was taken: Anderson, aye; Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Rainey, aye; Rankin, aye; Waterson, aye.

VI. CORRESPONDENCE

CCRSD received a records request on correspondence between the committee and the public.

CPS received a request for music department equipment for both CMS and CPS, and approximately ten emails inquiring about cell phones.

VII. DISCUSSION

A. Challenge Success

Brian Miller and Katie Stahl presented findings from the CCHS Challenge Success Student Survey. Students were asked to identify categories that describe CHHS and the top three were difficult or stressful; caring and welcoming; and fun. Positive trends identified included a "fun" school culture, reduced homework, and benefits from the Flex Block. Students suggested other improvements such as no homework on weekends or during breaks; a reduced homework load; having teachers coordinate due dates for major projects and assessments; and more opportunities for hands-on and active learning.

Some of the challenges identified included sleep deprivation; feelings of disconnect among students of color, gender non-binary, and gender queer students; a widespread perception of a singular path to success; schedule overload; a competitive culture; and a perceived lack of resilience and coping skills. Only 77% of students feel they have a trusted adult at school to confide in about personal problems. The school is addressing these challenges by developing a well-balanced schedule to support student well-being; fostering a caring, collaborative, and respectful school community; developing students' coping skills to navigate pressure; focusing on students of color, LGBTQ+, non-binary and gender queer; targeting professional development on student connectedness through relationship mapping; and the constructive use of Artificial Intelligence.

B. MCI Concord Update

Mark Howell and Emily Rush, members of the MCI Concord Advisory Board, presented an overview of the MCI redevelopment. The project will begin with the decommissioning and environmental evaluation of the 51-acre site, following the Department of Corrections closure of the prison. The advisory board is considering residential, commercial, and municipal uses, including a potential new school. The on-site wastewater treatment plant requires maintenance and expansion to adequately serve the local area, which the plant is currently discussing with state officials.

The advisory board is actively engaging the community through public workshops, themed discussions, and surveys. A consultant is retained to facilitate community engagement and integrate data-driven solutions into the community's vision. The planning and development goal is to create an RFP that accurately reflects the community's desired balance of residential, commercial, municipal, and open space development. Additional public workshops are planned for the spring to ensure continued community input.

C. School Committee Goals

Ms. Viola joined the meeting via Zoom at 7:58 PM and presented the status of the school committee goals. The current ongoing initiatives include the development of a cell phone policy; Title IX updates; the "Story of the School" digital and print versions; and the superintendent evaluation.

D. School Committee Evaluation

The committee discussed the upcoming school committee evaluation scheduled for April. MASCO has provided a draft that will be distributed to committee members for completion. The timing of the evaluation is being shifted from August to better reflect the current committee's performance. They also discussed expanding participation in the evaluation to include METCO representatives Ayesha Lawton and Michelle McDougall, and potentially administrative staff in the future.

VIII. SUPERINTENDENT, CHAIRS AND LIAISONS UPDATE

Ms. Rankin welcomed the new METCO representative, Michelle McDougall, and thanked Ayesha Lawton for her recruitment efforts. She announced the Concord Select Board's creation of a Land Matrix Committee and their request for a school board volunteer. Ms. Rankin reminded attendees that the next meeting will be in Carlisle and will focus solely on CCHS in a regional context. She also addressed concerns about the Thoreau Playground project, thanking donors for their significant fundraising and clarifying that the school committee will vote on the final design after fundraising is complete, taking recent parent feedback on accessibility into account.

Dr. Hunter updated the committee on recent district events including the DESE visit that focused on the METCO program, and incorporated student perspectives; the grand opening of Concord PossAbilities, a student-run merchandise initiative by members of the CCHS Launch program; the AI committee addressing the use and opportunity AI can give students; and she shared positive feedback from teachers in the new middle school. Dr. Hunter is following up on anti-Semitic concerns raised in a previous meeting and she scheduled a meeting with the local rabbi to discuss strategies and support. She introduced the newest member of the

Concord Police Department, Thor, the comfort puppy, who will patrol schools with the SRO.

Mr. Waterson gave an update on the campus completion project, outlining the development and review of FAQs. The FAQ will be published on the school website, shared with external organizations, and included in the town meeting briefing book. The subcommittee is preparing a six-minute presentation for the May 18th town meeting; planning a Carlisle podcast on the amenities building; circulating an advocacy letter to thirty field-using organizations; and scheduling a comprehensive discussion on the amenities building.

Ms. Marano attended the Select Board meeting, including the Doug White turf hearing where the decision was made to move forward with turf, incorporating input from the schools. The Select Board School Board Committee Meeting has been rescheduled from April 10th to April 15th. Ms. Marano also noted that the DEI commission, which met last month, will be holding a candidate coffee tomorrow night at the Concord Public Library.

Ms. Rainey reported that the Select Board is eliminating the Sustainability Director position. This decision is expected to impact the school district's sustainability collaborations with the town. Dr. Hunter will clarify the working relationship between the school district and the town regarding sustainability efforts.

IX. ACTION ITEMS

A. Vote to Approve CPS Bus Lease

Mr. Conry presented the Lessee Resolution to lease two new buses, replacing vehicles nine to ten years old, at a cost of approximately \$325,000 per district, and net of trade-in values. Mr. Conry noted the decreased lead times for bus orders is now at eight months and confirmed that funds will be held in escrow until the buses are inspected post-delivery.

Ms. Marano moved, and Ms. Rankin seconded the motion to approve the CPS Bus Lessee Resolution as written in the packet under Exhibit A. Roll call was taken: Anderson, aye; Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Rainey, aye; Rankin, aye; Viola, aye; Waterson, aye.

B. Vote to Approve CCRSD Bus Lease

Ms. Marano moved, and Mr. Waterson seconded the motion to approve the CCRSD Bus Lessee Resolution as written in the packet under Exhibit A. Roll call was taken: Anderson, aye; Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Rainey, aye; Rankin, aye; Viola, aye; Waterson, aye.

C. Consent to Replace Doug White Fields

The Concord-Carlisle Regional School Committee discussed the need for formal consent to replace the turf at the Doug White fields. The town manager requested this approval, as per the intergovernmental agreement between the school and the town, to allow the project to proceed. The committee acknowledged the need for a future presentation from town and school leaders to discuss the project's scope and timeline.

Ms. Marano moved, and Mr. Waterson seconded the motion that the Concord-Carlisle Regional School District give consent to replace the Doug White Fields as per the intergovernmental agreement. Roll was taken: Anderson, aye; Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Rainey, aye; Rankin, aye; Viola, aye; Waterson, aye.

X. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Ms. Marano moved, and Mr. Waterson seconded the motion that the Concord School Committee and Concord-Carlisle Regional District School Committee enter Executive Session under Purpose 2 of the Open Meeting Law: To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with the Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations and not return to Open Session. Roll was taken: Anderson, aye; Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Rainey, aye; Rankin, aye; Viola, aye; Waterson, aye.

Executive Session was called at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Gilmore

Approved: April 10, 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