

JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

**Concord-Carlisle School Committee
Concord School Committee
February 4, 2026**

Present: Tracey Marano, Chair CCSC
Brian Waterson, Vice-Chair CCSC
Carrie Rankin, Vice-Chair CSC; CCSC
Sandeep Pisharody, CSC; CCSC
Michael Williams, CSC; CCSC
Lynette Kelleher, CCSC via Zoom
Ayesha Lawton, CSC METCO
Michelle MacDougall, CSC METCO via Zoom

Not Present: Andrew Herchek, Chair 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. Rankin called the Concord School Committee to order at 5:45 PM. Roll was taken: Marano, present; Pisharody, present; Rankin, present; and Williams, present.

II. DISCUSSION

A. Approve Thoreau Playground Phase 2

Principal Justin Sparks and the CHA design team presented Phase 2 of the Thoreau School playground project. This nature-inspired extension is designed to complement the active-play structures completed in Phase 1. Phase 2 offers an inclusive backyard vision, prioritizing imaginative and quiet play for children who prefer reading or socializing. Key features include native perennial gardens, boardwalks, a dry rock riverbed, and sand play areas. The team highlighted accessibility features, including picnic tables, benches, and an elevated sand table designed for wheelchair height. To ensure long-term sustainability, the design plan also utilizes drought-tolerant, low-maintenance plant species.

Ms. Marano moved and Mr. Williams seconded the motion to approve the Thoreau Playground Phase 2 as presented. Roll was taken: Marano, aye; Pisharody, aye; Rankin, aye; and Williams, aye.

III. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Marano called the Concord Carlisle Regional School Committee to order at 6:00 PM. Roll was taken: Kelleher, present; Marano, present; Pisharody, present; Rankin, present; Waterson, present; and Williams, present.

IV. RECOGNITIONS - DECA

Madame Pinto, the CCHS DECA advisor, introduced the student-led business club, which has evolved into one of the school's most popular extracurricular activities. The club prepares students for diverse career paths through rigorous projects ranging from apparel marketing to

complex financial modeling. This professional business focus resulted in a successful inaugural competition season, with 12 of the 36 students advancing to the state conference. Beyond competition, the program serves as a bridge to the professional world by equipping students with essential soft skills, such as public speaking and networking, that remain invaluable regardless of their career paths. To fund travel to state and national events, students are fundraising through local business partnerships and community events.

V. SUPERINTENDENT AND CHAIRS UPDATE

Dr. Hunter announced the district launched an anti-hate series in partnership with local community organizations to foster a united front against discrimination. The initiative began with an impactful Facing History program, which facilitated introductions between various advocacy groups and signaled the growth of a powerful local coalition. The series continues with sessions led by Carlos Hoyt, followed by a concluding presentation in March by Robin Oaks focusing on LGBTQ+ inclusion. The district's goal is to keep conversations at the forefront of community life, encouraging residents to engage in proactive discussions about fostering a safer, more inclusive environment.

Ms. Marano celebrated the completion of the Story of the Schools, a publication and visual showcase highlighting the district's diverse achievements and innovative programming. Ms. Rankin was recognized for leading the effort to finalize the project, now available online and in hard copy. Ms. Marano announced the upcoming regional meeting on March 4th will be held at the Kroc Center in Boston.

Ms. Lawton discussed several initiatives aimed at strengthening the METCO program and fostering a more inclusive environment. These efforts included building deeper community connections by spotlighting METCO families and their contributions; and appointing a METCO representative to the Alcott PTG to ensure diverse perspectives are represented.

Mr. Waterson updated the committee on the Campus Completion project and its funding challenges. The private foundation outreach had limited success due to geographic constraints; and the committee is pivoting to state municipal ADA grants as a potential funding source.

VI. CCHS STUDENT UPDATE

Maddie Clancy, Mark Johnson, and Evelyn Mudge shared recent CCHS events, noting the second semester began with a mix of academic milestones and community engagement. The curriculum expanded to include new offerings such as Criminal Law and AP Business, and the school recently welcomed freshmen during a successful 8th Grade Curriculum Night. CCHS celebrated the swim team's recent victory and look forward to future advocacy and cultural events, including the Black Student Union's multi-themed Black History Month campaign and intensive Mentors in Violence Prevention training. Students are excited about the upcoming cultural immersion trip to Quebec and the spring production of 9 to 5.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ellen Quackenbush, 206 Prairie Street, Concord, addressed a prior meeting discussion on approved agenda items versus topics not on the agenda. She feels the committee misinterpreted the Open Meeting Law during the January 21, 2026, meeting by barring discussion of an item not on the published agenda regarding a bias incident report. Ms.

Quackenbush stated Dr. Hunter, as a town employee, should not have spoken on the matter if elected committee members would be prohibited. Ms. Quackenbush called for more civil and balanced deliberations.

Gail Hire, 54 Nancy Road, Concord, expressed concern on the use of QR codes at the high school, specifically those placed in bathrooms for reporting cleanliness. She feels QR codes encourage phone use in private areas, excludes students without smartphones, and pose security risks such as phishing. Ms. Hire suggested the district implement a policy to discourage the use of QR codes in all schools.

Margaret Schumacker, Concord, addressed bullying and emphasized that standard disciplinary measures, such as investigations and suspensions, are failing to curb the behavior. Ms. Schumacker advocated for holding an all-school assembly after incidents, noting gathering the entire student body allows leadership to establish a collective tone of empathy and kindness.

Emily Lines, Concord, requested a bell-to-bell cell phone policy that would require physical storage in lockers or pouches at CMS and CCHS. Ms. Lines shared that research has linked together digital distractions, cyberbullying, and mental health. She concluded simply keeping phones in backpacks is insufficient and places an enforcement burden on teachers.

VIII. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Staff Children Enrollments
- B. Warrants
- C. Executive Session Minutes 12/17/25
- D. Joint Meeting Minutes 12/17/25
- E. Joint Meeting Minutes 1/7/26
- F. Joint Meeting Minutes 1/21/26
- G. CCHS Performing Arts Trip
- H. Removal of CCHS Engineering Science Equipment
- I. Removal of CCHS TV Monitors
- J. Anonymous Donation of \$9,999 via CMS PTG toward CCHS EV charging station

Mr. Williams moved and Mr. Waterson seconded the motion to approve the Consent Agenda with item #D and item #F removed. Roll was taken: Kelleher, aye; Marano, aye; Pisharody, aye; Rankin, aye; Waterson, aye; and Williams, aye.

Mr. Pisharody, Mr. Williams, Ms. Lawton, Ms. Marano, and Mr. Waterson discussed issues involving the January 17, 2026 minutes. Mr. Williams, Ms. Lawton, Ms. Marano, and Mr. Waterson discussed how matters occurring between meetings, but not on the agenda, may be brought up in a meeting.

IX. CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Marano reported four pieces of correspondence were received on cell phones, open meeting laws, and protocols.

X. DISCUSSION

A. Bias and Hate Incident Working Group

Mr. Pisharody reported the Bias and Hate Incident Working Group recently reviewed data from the Middlesex County DA's Office, which revealed a high volume of reports from Concord. Of the 33 incidents filed in 2025 in the county, 14 originated in Concord, and 8 of those were school based. Dr. Hunter noted the universal reporting system which captures anonymous reports has become a pipeline to the Concord Police. The workflow of the school's reporting system was discussed. Using the overall system's findings to inform us on the efficacy of our policies was mentioned. The Working Group's charge is to propose a bias and hate reporting system for our community and provide advice on methods to build trust in our unified response to these incidents.

B. Special Education Update

Students and staff from Concord PossAbilities celebrated its one-year anniversary. The students, from the CCHS Launch program, shared their pride in producing custom merchandise using professional equipment, such as Cricut printers and the hands-on business experience. The store continues to grow and has built community service partnerships with local PTGs and the Discovery Museum.

Director of Student Services and Special Education Angel Charles presented an update on the Special Education program. Ms. Charles cited the addition of elementary special education administrators helped achieve systemic improvements by streamlining transitions, increasing consistency across programs, and improving parent communication. The district expanded internal capacity through specialized professional development, diagnostic training for psychologists, and the addition of a visually impaired teacher. All efforts contributed to a decrease in out-of-district placements while allowing the district to tuition-in students from other communities, further stabilizing the regional budget.

Ms. Charles reported the district supports a substantial special education population, with the highest student headcounts concentrated at CCHS and CMS. Programming is strategically tailored by age, ranging from Integrated Pre-K to the Launch program for young adults ages 18–22. Data has shown specific learning disabilities and health-related needs are the most prevalent categories at CPS and CCRSD, so the district has targeted professional development in Safety Care, ADOS-2 diagnostics, and Augmentative and Alternative Communication to meet these diverse student requirements.

C. Superintendent Goals Mid-Year Update

Dr. Hunter presented her mid-year update on her 2025–2026 strategic goals, noting that most district objectives have achieved green status. She noted a significant improvement in the quality of professional development, citing exit surveys that show high staff satisfaction and a stronger alignment between provider topics and educator needs. Academically, the district is seeing positive momentum in its literacy program and CCHS curriculum, which includes new AP courses, diverse electives, and restructured math levels. Only one goal remains yellow, the alignment of the intervention process, due to budget uncertainties regarding math specialists.

Dr. Hunter also shared the launch of Units of Study in Writing for grades K–5 and the integration of AI guidelines for CCHS staff. Student well-being initiatives featured the Teen

Mental Health First Aid program and the expanded use of Sown to Grow, an emotional check-in tool. To foster inclusive practices, the district completed a comprehensive special education audit and had an increase in enrollment of students of color in advanced high school courses.

Dr. Hunter concluded with final highlights including the implementation of EL Education for elementary literacy; targeted interventions through the Multi-Tiered System of Supports; a 2.5% increase in diverse hiring; expanding professional development in Universal Design for Learning Facility improvements; the completion of the Ripley entrance renovation; and the district maintaining its commitment to fiscal responsibility with a 3.2% budget increase designed to support educational initiatives.

D. School Committee Goals Update

The School Committee reviewed its annual goals, bringing several initiatives back on track while identifying actions to address remaining gaps. While budget and superintendent evaluation goals remain on schedule, two-way community communication is currently behind due to a lack of interactive forums, such as podcasts and town halls. To remedy this, members committed to organizing a series of in-person and virtual coffees in Concord, Carlisle, and Boston before April. The committee discussed a potential collaboration with the CCHS radio station for community interviews. To address delays in policy oversight, the committee will launch a publicly accessible Policy Tracker checklist on the district website to monitor MASC updates.

E. Sustainability Updates

Dr. Hunter presented the district's multi-faceted approach to sustainability, which integrates infrastructure upgrades, student engagement, and community partnerships. Key initiatives focused on decarbonization, grant leveraging, and the implementation of bi-directional electric bus chargers that allow vehicles to serve as energy storage units. The district is currently in discussions with Highland Electric to acquire five federally funded electric buses to replace aging, first-generation models.

At the school level, programs such as the CMS sustainability scavenger hunt and the Willard Elementary 3 Sisters gardening and composting projects embed environmental stewardship into student life. The district continues to advance its energy goals by collaborating on solar installations, maintaining 100% renewable electricity through credits, and fostering long-term resilience via waste-diversion strategies and sustainable building standards. The CMS solar project has been prioritized for state funding due to its completed design and potential for significant environmental impact. The district is transitioning from a single coordinator to a building-based model with dedicated sustainability staff at each school, supported by new parent green coordinators within the PTGs to sustain composting and garden programs.

F. Cell Phone Policy

The committee discussed a potential high school cell phone policy, noting MASC currently lacks a model policy. While the district already enforces bell-to-bell restrictions for grades K-8, the high school relies on handbook rules and classroom caddies to manage devices during instructional time. Key considerations included formalizing rules into a board policy to provide structural authority for enforcement; the potential logistical impact on open campus privileges; the importance of student safety apps; and teaching responsible usage before

adulthood. The administration was directed to gather feedback via surveys and meetings with students, teachers, and parents to better understand the community's sentiment versus their technical knowledge of the issue.

G. MASC Recommended Policy Updates - First Draft

The committee conducted a first reading of updated school policies including GBEC: Gifts to and Solicitation by Staff; JJE: Student Fundraising Activities; and KBE: Relations with Parent Booster Organizations. The 2025 updates align informal fundraising efforts with state legislation, ensuring volunteers and school groups understand legal requirements. The committee plans a final vote in March, with the goal of streamlining remaining updates through April to remain on schedule for the academic year.

H. FY26 Q2 CCRSD Budget Transfers

Mr. Conry presented the FY26 Q2 CCRSD Budget Status Report as of January 12, 2026, noting a total adjusted budget of \$41.6 million. The largest allocations are directed toward Instructional Leadership and Services. Approximately \$1.6 million (3.3%) remains unencumbered, as most remaining costs, such as salaries, have already been committed. The proposed transfers will adjust various categories to ensure the budget accurately reflects year-to-date spending drivers and fixed charges.

Ms. Rankin moved and Mr. Pisharody seconded the motion to approve the FY26 Q2 CCRSD Budget Transfers as presented. Roll was taken: Kelleher, aye; Marano, aye; Pisharody, aye; Rankin, aye; Waterson, aye; and Williams, aye.

I. Carlisle Finance Committee Request

Mr. Conry reported that the Carlisle Finance Committee requested a \$100,000 reduction in its budget assessment to mitigate a 9.37% increase caused by shifting enrollment. The \$100,000 reduction for Carlisle requires a proportional \$400,000 reduction across the entire district, posing a challenge to educational services. However, this gap may be offset by a \$90,000 increase in state aid and potential savings from lower-than-anticipated health insurance premiums. Mr. Conry discussed repurposing OPEB funds for capital projects like maintenance and turf replacement; he observed that while Carlisle prefers using CPA funds for these projects, Concord does not. The committee took no formal vote while awaiting final insurance rates and will continue discussions with Carlisle leadership.

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Waterson moved that Mr. Pisharody seconded the motion that CSC and CCSC enter into Executive Session pursuant to M.G.L.c.30A, §21(a)(7), to comply with or act under authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements, specifically M.G.L. c.30A, §22(f) and (g) with regard to the review, approval, and/or consideration for disclosure of executive session minutes from November 5, 2025, as well as M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(4) which the executive session was originally held, and under Purpose 3 with respect to Bus Driver Incentives. The Committee will not return to the open session.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Gilmore

Approved: April 14, 2026

Abbreviations:

CCHS Concord-Carlisle High School
CCRSB Concord-Carlisle Regional School District
CCSC Concord-Carlisle Regional District School Committee
CCTA Concord-Carlisle Teachers' Association
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
SEPA Special Education Parent Advisory Council
WRAP Writing, Reading, and Academic Processes
YRBS Youth Risk Behavior Survey