

Concord School District Board of Education
Budget Work Session #3
February 17, 2020

Board members present: Jennifer Patterson, Tom Croteau, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, Barb Higgins, Chuck Crush, Liza Poinier, David Parker, Gina Cannon

Administration present: Dr. Frank Bass, *Interim Superintendent*, Donna Palley, *Assistant Superintendent*, Bob Belmont, *Director of Student Services*, Jack Dunn, *Business Administrator*

Board President Jennifer Patterson called the meeting to order at 5:38 p.m., noting that the agenda for that work session was to discuss the Student Services portion of the FY20-21 budget, including proposed, related new positions. Agenda items not covered at the meeting would be continued at the March 5 Work Session.

Assistant Superintendent Donna Palley reviewed the agenda: overview of Student Services; student enrollment; staffing; feedback regarding the elementary Assistant Principal positions; student progress data; proposed new positions; budget; upcoming budget meeting dates; and public comment.

Director of Student Services Bob Belmont explained that the Student Services mission was to provide services to all Concord students from preschool to age 21 that support the District vision and mission statements. He described the core functions of Student Services, including guidance, school nurses, Section 504 services, Title I programs, English Language Learning programs, homeless students, special education programs, and early childhood education. Ms. Palley explained the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), a system of data-based decision making, problem solving, and continuous progress monitoring in order to best match instruction to need for improved student outcomes. She described the tiers on which students are classified:

Tier 1: Core curriculum provided for all students (80-90% of students)

Tier 2: Modification of the core curriculum for students who need targeted instruction (5-10% of students)

Tier 3: Specialized and intensive curriculum for students who need intensive support (1-8% of students)

Mr. Belmont explained the large size and broad scope of Student Services. He noted the many different positions at the school level and explained how these positions functioned across all MTSS tiers. David Parker asked which services were provided to charter schools and which positions provided those services. Mr. Belmont noted that he and the Out of District (OOD) Coordinator were responsible for and worked with charter schools on these services.

Mr. Belmont explained section 504 plans, which are a section of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in programs which

receive federal financial assistance. Section 504 plans, for students with a handicap that has a significant impact on a major life activity (e.g. learning), provide reasonable accommodations in the public school setting. Examples of reasonable accommodations in 504 plans include:

- preferential seating
- extended time on tests and assignments
- reduced homework or classwork
- verbal, visual, or technology aids
- modified textbooks or audio-video materials
- behavior management support
- adjusted class schedules or grading
- verbal testing

The number of students currently on Section 504 plans per school were as follows:

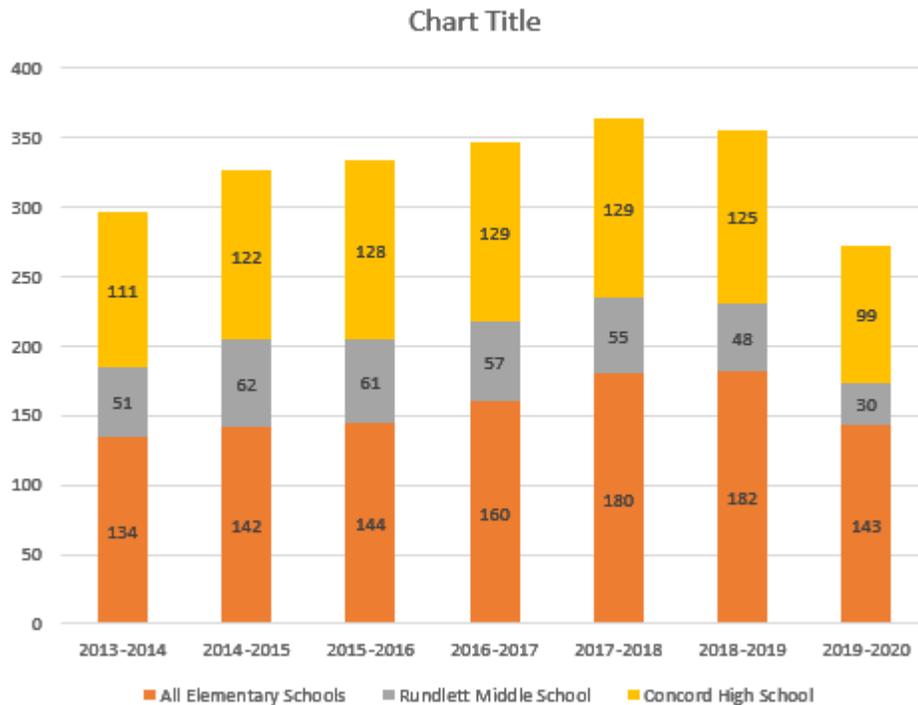
School of Enrollment	Students on Section 504 Plans
Abbot-Downing	15
Broken Ground	09
Beaver Meadow	05
Christa McAuliffe	17
Mill Brook	00
Rundlett Middle	53
Concord High	45
Total	144

Mr. Belmont reviewed Title I school day programming and enrollment numbers, explaining that these services typically consist of reading and mathematics support for students with extra needs. Title I summer programming across the District includes an “introduction to kindergarten” program and summer nutrition services. Board members asked why Title I school day mathematics programs have no student enrollment at three of the elementary schools. Mr. Belmont explained that math programs at these schools were once part of extended day programming, but a decrease in Title I funds had led to those programs being cut. He described how schools are deemed eligible for Title I funding: the amount of funding received is based on a school rank order determined by the percentage of the student population that qualifies for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program. At a certain percentage, a school would then be eligible for a certain amount of money per pupil, times the number of students who qualify for free or reduced meals. Each school makes a decision to use these funds to focus on math or reading. He said

while schools could opt to focus on other educational areas, math and reading are the strongest evidence-based programs that contribute to student outcomes.

Mr. Belmont discussed the English Language Learners (ELL) population, noting that 272 students received support as ELLs in the District. The three primary languages spoken by these students are Nepali, Kinyarwanda, and Swahili. There are 37 other languages spoken by Concord’s ELL students, who represent 7% of students enrolled in the District. Mr. Belmont noted that the number of ELL students decreased significantly from last year, because the proficiency score for the NHDOE-mandated ACCESS 2.0 test was lowered, meaning a number of students no longer qualified for ELL services. He highlighted the CHS ELL Program as regionally recognized for its exemplary transition to post-secondary education opportunities.

Five Year ELL Fall Enrollment



Mr. Belmont reviewed the District’s homeless, family services and enrollment numbers. He explained the McKinney-Vento Act, which ensures that homeless students and youth are identified and enrolled in school and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in school. District highlights include:

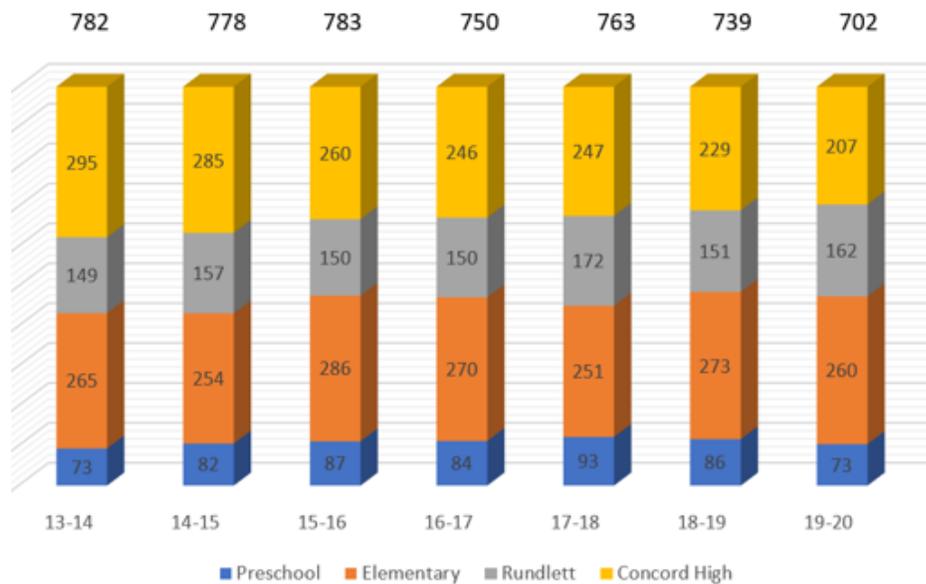
- Increasing student attendance
- Access to the Free and Reduced Lunch program
- Increasing achievement/performance, especially in reading/English and mathematics
- Providing students with clothing, school supplies and counseling as needed
- Access to extended-day tutoring

- Access to summer programming
- Ensuring access to free transportation to school of origin. 2019-2020 Title I Part A Grant provided \$57,971.32 in funds to cover these costs

Number of Homeless Students

School of Enrollment	Homeless Students
Abbot-Downing	16
Broken Ground	02
Beaver Meadow	06
Christa McAuliffe	02
Mill Brook	02
Rundlett Middle	23
Concord High	12
Total	63

Mr. Belmont reviewed special education enrollment, noting an overall decline in special education students (739 to 702) and highlighting OOD (28), charter school (22), and Second Start (29) placements.



Mr. Belmont provided data on the frequency of identified educational disabilities in the District for the 2019-2020 school year. He highlighted Adrienne Shoemaker as a nationally-recognized teacher of the visually impaired.

DISABILITY	PRESCHOOL			ELEMENTARY					MIDDLE	HIGH	Total #	Out of District and Charter School
	BMS	MBS	*CP	ADS	BGS	BMS	CMS	MBS	RMS	CHS		
Autism	2	6	0	5	9	11	13	7	25	37	115	11
Deaf-Blindness	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Deafness	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	4	1	8	2
Developmental Delay	27	21	9	16	3	14	16	25	0	0	131	3
Emotional Disturbance	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	23	29	57	10
Hearing Impairment	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	4	1	8	2
Intellectual Disabilities	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	9	12	23	0
Multiple Disabilities	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	1	2	7	0
Orthopedic Impairment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Health Impaired	2	2	1	10	16	13	7	6	55	81	193	9
Specific Learning Disability	0	0	0	10	35	10	10	7	74	54	200	9
Speech-Language Impairment	8	6	19	9	14	7	8	9	22	30	132	4
Traumatic Brain Injury	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	2
Visual Impairment – Blindness	0	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	3	14	0

Chuck Crush asked how emotional disturbance is defined and how those children are identified and classified as such. Ms. Palley explained that there are specific criteria for that diagnosis and that providers are cautious in diagnosing young children. She added that usually those children are in a different category of disability or impairment until approximately age 8. Mr. Parker asked for the criteria for diagnosing children with emotional disturbance. Ms. Palley will provide this to Board members. Tom Croteau noted a focus on students who have witnessed or been part of trauma in recent years and asked where those students fit under the Student Services umbrella. Ms. Palley explained that those students may have a behavior plan or receive Tier 2 services, but may not have an actual disability diagnosis or IEP in place.

Ms. Palley described the roles and relationships between the elementary Principals and Assistant Principals. She shared the numbers of students, staff, and administrators in each school and explained that while the ratios were high even after the addition of the Assistant Principals, they were an improvement over previous ratios.

SCHOOL	Student: Admin Ratio		Staff: Admin Ratio	
	Principal	Principal +AP	Principal	Principal +AP
Abbot-Downing	1:341	1:170	1:61	1:30
Beaver Meadow	1:381	1:190	1:72	1:36
Broken Ground	1:347	1:173	1:68	1:34
Christa McAuliffe	1:401	1:200	1:68	1:34
Mill Brook	1:398	1:199	1:88	1:44

Elementary Principals Susan Lauze (BGS), Anthony Blinn (ADS), Katie Scarpati (MBS), Michele Vance (BMS), and Kris Gallo (CMS) provided their input on the impact of the Assistant Principals in their schools.

- The Assistant Principal's availability allows the Principal to attend to building leadership including assessments, review of data, monitoring instruction and progress of students, and curriculum implementation support.
- The Principal has an additional on-site expert with whom s/he can regularly discuss how students are doing academically and behaviorally, providing more rigorous and frequent review of individual students. This enables the school to "tweak" plans to be more responsive to student needs.
- The Assistant Principal strengthens the school-home connection through regular contact with parents and caregivers as they drop off or pick up students, and regularly calls parents to discuss issues, answer questions and schedule meetings.
- Special education and ELL staff benefit from on-going supervision, modeling and support in all phases of assessment; implementation of best practices to meet student needs; writing IEPs; and monitoring student progress.
- The addition of the Assistant Principal position has allowed for a full-time on-site administrative presence to promote building safety for students and staff.
- With two administrators in the building, there can be split and shared observations of staff, enabling deeper conversations about instruction and best practices.
- Having two administrators allows attendance at meetings without interruptions. This enables more focused conversations without an administrator having to be pulled out to handle different situations.
- Along with the Principal, the Assistant Principal attends PTA and school functions to foster community.
- Consistent collaboration and direct modeling by the Assistant Principal occur with special educators, classroom teachers and educational assistants regarding instruction and support of students with learning and behavioral challenges.
- Case managers have been able to increase their service time with students because the Assistant Principal is available to respond to student needs.
- Assistant Principals chair the Tier 3 team and supervise these plans.
- More time, focus and facilitation for Tier 2 and 3 teams. Assistant Principals facilitate conversations with classroom teachers and others in determining interventions and monitoring the effectiveness of these plans.
- Assistant Principals focus and "dive in" on student services to determine whether all services are being provided, what exactly is being done, and whether a staff member needs additional guidance in delivering services.

- The addition of the Assistant Principal enables administrators to be more fully engaged with students, teachers, staff and specialists. Data is measured in a timelier way, activities are supported comprehensively, and communication is more engaged.
- The school's relationship with Riverbend has been strengthened through more regular contact, time to get releases signed, more wraparound meetings, and staying up to date on the agency's developments.
- There have been notable increases in professional development across the school for all staff.
- The addition of the Assistant Principal brings student services staff together, allowing weekly management planning instead of disconnected programs.

Mr. Parker asked for the frequency of being "pulled out" of meetings as described by the Principals. Ms. Lauze and Ms. Vance explained that this was a daily occurrence but has happened less frequently with the support of the Assistant Principals. Ms. Vance added that this was the first year she had been able to be present for and complete her staff observations and evaluations in a timely manner and that being the sole administrator prior to this year was often disconnected and fragmented.

Ms. Gallo echoed comments from the other Principals and added that sharing observation and supervision duties had been significantly improved, with more time for face-to-face meetings with staff for essential conversations. She explained that her special education staff would speak highly of the benefit Carol McCarthy (CMS Assistant Principal) has provided, including increased ability to attend nighttime and PTA meetings, which fosters community with parents. She explained that Dr. McCarthy, whose background was in special education, helped develop behavioral plans for Tier 2 and Tier 3 students.

Ms. Vance added that the Assistant Principals have been able to provide more support and professional development to Educational Assistants as well as to create coverage schedules when staff are absent, or even provide coverage themselves.

Interim Superintendent Dr. Frank Bass asked Mr. Blinn for his observations on school function and climate with the addition of the Assistant Principals from last year to this year. Mr. Blinn described a significant improvement in response time and availability during crisis events, noting that previously such an event could tie him up for several hours, rendering him unavailable to staff and students. Now, staff could rely both on him and Laura-Beth Ulwick (ADS Assistant Principal) interchangeably for support. He noted that school feedback was heavily in favor of dual administration and that many staff could not now imagine not having the extra support. He added that this extra time and availability to develop relationships with students and staff was very valuable. Dr. Bass emphasized that the Assistant Principals were serving multiple roles in their schools.

Ms. Scarpati noted that her Assistant Principal (MBS Assistant Principal Allison Pelletier) was able to focus on Tier 2 and Tier 3 students, freeing her to spend more time in classrooms and to focus on large trends, schoolwide instruction, and areas of growth.

Barb Higgins noted that, while that one Principal would not be sufficient to support the District's large elementary schools, she had not heard enough about the Assistant Principals' intended focus on special education. She asked if perhaps the money spent on the Assistant Principal positions might be better spent on Special Education Coordinators, and suggested an anonymous survey of special education staff to get confidential feedback on how they feel about the Assistant Principal roles. Ms. Lauze, Ms. Gallo, and Mr. Blinn emphasized that special education teachers had complete access to the Assistant Principals, and that they were always available to special education staff to address concerns. Mr. Blinn added that both his and his Assistant Principal's backgrounds were in special education and that outcomes were better now than they had ever been.

Mr. Parker suggested that Concord taxpayers might want to see quantifiable data on the benefit of the Assistant Principals.

Ms. Patterson suggested that the Board continue these conversations at the next meeting in the interest of time, which would also allow administrators to gather feedback in response to these questions.

Mr. Crush commented that he had voted against the addition of the Assistant Principal positions last year, but was impressed with the Principals' presentation and that he understood both the benefit to the schools and the burden on taxpayers. He asked whether anything had been lost in the transition from one administrator per school to two. He also asked whether the Board could have more information about how the Assistant Principals support paraprofessionals, and who the paraprofessionals report to.

Dr. Bass agreed to meet with the elementary Principals and form an ad hoc committee with the goal of gathering this information. He explained that it would be interesting to see the flow of activity, how these roles work together, where the impact was, and how the positions are valuable assets. Ms. Patterson asked that Board members email additional questions to Dr. Bass to discuss with that ad hoc committee.

Ms. Palley provided data on elementary school suspensions, noting a 16% decrease in these suspensions and that she was encouraged by an additional significant decrease in the number of office referrals from the previous year. She reviewed goals for student referral numbers, noting that the goal was to move students from the highest tier to the middle tier. She reviewed data to show how students were meeting educational goals, noting the difficulty in extracting specific student objectives based on the individuality of IEP data. She emphasized, with unanimous agreement from the elementary Principals in attendance, that teachers did not want to have to lower their standards in order to be able to say all of their goals have been met.

Ms. Palley provided a profile of student needs in difficult situations and explained that, while student populations may be decreasing in number, they were increasing in severity and intensity of behavior. These difficult situations included:

- Families impacted by substance misuse: students who witness drug dealing, drug use, overdoses, death, or their parent's arrests/incarcerations

- Families experiencing domestic violence; students who witness extreme violence at home, including death
- Families that are homeless; students who, despite their families' best intentions, experience disruptions in living situation, or sustained, disrupted education
- Students who are being raised by grandparents or other family members because their parents are unavailable
- Students who, as a result of significant behavioral issues, have been asked to leave multiple community preschools/childcare centers

Ms. Palley noted that District staff have made 218 reports to DCYF for suspected abuse and/or neglect since the start of school in August.

Ms. Palley briefly described the proposed new positions of two Social Workers, a Family Home Visitor, six special education teachers, and a part-time Occupational Therapist, and explained how they would align with Student Services. She said that when the Board next revisited Student Services, data from Dr. Bass' ad hoc committee to discuss the Assistant Principals would be available, as well as more granular data on the nexus of schools' areas of need and the new positions' responsibilities. She added that it was important to ensure appropriate follow-up so that these positions were achieving their intended goals.

She added that OOD placements, Bill White & Associates contracted services, and MTSS work would be discussed at the next Work Session.

Ms. Patterson explained that the Board would vote on the "budget to post" on March 5 and that it was important to ensure questions were submitted ahead of time to keep meeting discussions focused and productive. She added that there was another open work session scheduled for March 9 at which more topics could potentially be addressed. She then opened the meeting for public comment.

Concord resident Jocelyn Jerry-Wolcott, a District social worker for 23 years, has spent most of that time working at the high school with students with emotional handicaps; adding that she was retiring after this year. She explained that it was good to have a social worker in schools and that the number of school social workers was growing rapidly throughout the state. She said the most important focus of this position was early intervention with families, beginning as soon as a child entering the District was identified with difficult behaviors. She emphasized the importance of allying with these families, and establishing and maintaining relationships with children and families for consistency and stability. She explained that it was crucial to see a child in the context of its family and world. She provided Board members with an information packet on school social work.

Concord resident, teacher and CEA President Mike Macri expressed concerned that what he heard at Board meetings did not line up with what he saw and heard in the schools every day. He said the Assistant Principals spent 90% of their time in crisis situations with students with behavioral issues, and that the money spent on Assistant Principals should be spent to add staff who work directly with kids. He noted that the Occupational

Therapists have massive caseloads. He explained the need to determine what was most effective for the kids every day and agreed with Ms. Higgins' earlier comment about soliciting candid feedback from classroom staff rather than just administrators.

Concord resident Betty Hoadley, a 58-year taxpayer, expressed concern about the number of new proposed positions. She found the elementary administrators' presentation interesting, encouraging and full of good information. She suggested that the Board look to the past to get ideas for the future, and to ask the Superintendent to provide a budget that was \$1 million less than the current iteration, as a way to see how various budget items were prioritized by administration. She emphasized that Concord could not afford every item in the budget and that she was representing taxpayers, specifically those on fixed incomes. She wondered why the process of figuring out which items should be included in the budget could not have been done earlier in the school year.

Ms. Patterson reviewed the upcoming meeting schedule.

2019-2020 BUDGET WORK SESSION SCHEDULE

DATE	DAY	TIME	LOCATION	TOPIC	NOTE
February 18 th	Monday	5:30pm	Central Office – Board Room	WS#2: Salaries and Benefits	
February 20 th	Wednesday	5:30pm	Central Office – Board Room	WS#3: Student Services	
March 4 th	Monday	5:30pm	Central Office – Board Room	WS#4: Curriculum and Technology	Monthly Board Meeting – 7pm
March 6 th	Wednesday	5:30pm	Central Office – Board Room	WS#5: Facilities	** POST BUDGET **
March 11 th	Monday	5:30pm	Central Office – Board Room	WS#6: CHS and CRTC Enrollments	
March 13 th	Wednesday	5:30pm	Central Office – Board Room	WS#7: OPEN	
March 18 th	Monday	7:00pm	MILL BROOK SCHOOL	WS#8: PUBLIC HEARING #1	
March 20 th	Wednesday	5:30pm	RUNDLETT MIDDLE SCHOOL	WS#9: PUBLIC HEARING #2	
March 25 th	Monday	5:45pm	Central Office – Board Room	WS#10: OPEN	Executive Committee – 5pm
March 27 th	Wednesday	5:30pm	Central Office – Board Room	WS#11: FINALIZE FY20 BUDGET	** 5 VOTES IN THE AFFIRMATIVE TO PASS**

The Board voted 9-0 to adjourn (motioned by Ms. Higgins, seconded by Mr. Crush).

The meeting adjourned at 7:07pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Barb Higgins, *Secretary*
 Lauren Hynds, *Recorder*