

Concord School District Board of Education
Board Work Session #6
March 11, 2019

- Board members** Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Jim Richards, Pam Wicks, Danielle Smith, Liza Poinier, Nancy Kane, Barb Higgins
- Absent** Jennifer Patterson, *President*
- Administration:** *Superintendent* Terri L. Forsten, *Assistant Superintendent* Donna Palley, *Business Administrator* Jack Dunn, *Director of Facilities and Planning* Matt Cashman, *Director of Human Resources* Larry Prince

Board President Jennifer Patterson called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m., noting that Board Work Session #6 was a review of school enrollment within the FY19-20 budget. Business Administrator Jack Dunn reviewed the agenda:

- Budget goals
- Class size guidelines
- Elementary school enrollment
- Rundlett Middle School enrollment
- Concord High School enrollment
- Concord Regional Technical Center enrollment
- Public comment
- Public information
- Future work sessions and public hearings

Mr. Dunn briefly reviewed the 2019-2020 budget goals:

- Regular education
 - Class sizes within policy guidelines
 - Extended Learning Opportunities (ELOs)
- Curriculum, instruction, and assessment
 - New materials for reading instruction
 - Competency grading and reporting
- Student Services
 - Elementary Assistant Principals
 - Program development for 3R elementary
- Technology
 - One-to-one devices for all students
 - Telephone replacement
- Capital purchases and debt service
 - 5% operating budget for debt service, including new proposed debt for roof replacements
- Community relations

- Success stories in Concord public schools
- Middle school facility plan

Superintendent Forsten reviewed Policy #641, which addresses District class size objectives: average of 17 at the kindergarten level, 21 at the primary level, and 25 at the intermediate level. If class size exceeds 20 students in kindergarten, 24 students in grades one through three, or 28 in grades four through six, educational consideration will be given to regrouping, employment of an aide or employment of an additional teacher. Secondary administrators will consider 30 students as a maximum class size and 15 as a minimum class size. Classes with student enrollment of fewer than 15 must have approval of the central administration.

She reviewed District enrollment trends, beginning with District-wide numbers and then reviewing each school individually. She noted an overall ten-year decreasing trend, with highlights as follows:

- Overall, the student population for Concord School District is expected to decrease over the next ten years.
- Currently there are no proposed or active residential developments in the city that would add significantly to the existing enrollment.
- Concord introduced full-day kindergarten this year, creating an enrollment increase in one zone, and the largest collection in student-to-births.
- The District's high school population may continue to experience loss in enrollment through SY2027 with an enrollment declining to 1,350 students.
- The District's middle school population (grades 6–8) is projected to decline annually starting SY2020, with an annual loss of 14–49 students per year.
- The elementary school population (PK–5) is projected to be stable compared to the middle and high school grades after experiencing declines the last four years.

Abbot-Downing School

During the current year, ADS has had large fifth grade classes of up to 27 students. Next year, ADS will have class sizes ranging from 18–23 students, well within policy guidelines. Next year, ADS will have one fewer classroom teacher.

Beaver Meadow School

During the current year, BMS created five multi-age classrooms at grades 4/5. This allowed classroom communities to create improved balance of students with special educational needs. Next year, BMS will have class sizes ranging from 16–24 students, well within policy guidelines.

Broken Ground School

During the current year, BGS has had class sizes within the range set by policy guidelines. Next year, BGS will have class sizes ranging from 21–23 students. This continues to be within policy guidelines.

Christa McAuliffe School

During the current year, CMS has had large classes at the fifth-grade level, with up to 26 in a classroom. An additional kindergarten teacher was added to maintain appropriate class sizes. Next year, CMS will have class sizes ranging from 1 –24 students, within policy guidelines. A classroom teacher has been added at CMS to support the likelihood that kindergarten will continue to need four classroom teachers to maintain appropriate class sizes.

Mill Brook School

During the current year, MBS had an increase in kindergarten enrollment, so a kindergarten teacher was added to maintain appropriate class sizes. Next year, MBS will have class sizes ranging from 18–21 students, within policy guidelines. There will be one fewer classroom teacher, as it is predicted that kindergarten will need six classroom teachers.

Rundlett Middle School

During the current year, RMS had a decrease in overall enrollment of 23 students. If every fifth grader transitions to RMS and if every current sixth and seventh grader remains enrolled, RMS will have an increase of 20 students. Eleven core classes have 27, 28, 29 students enrolled, including one Science class with 32 students. The four Language Arts classes that have 27, 27, 28, 28 students are co-taught.

Eighteen classes have 27 or more students in the classroom. District class size guidelines consider up to 28 students for grade 6 and up to 30 students in grades 7 and 8 as being within acceptable class sizes at the middle school level. There are an additional nine performing arts classes (band, chorus, music) with enrollments between 29–39 students. Ten core classes have between 27–29 students; four of those classes are co-taught. One science class has 32 students.

Jim Richards asked which science class has 32 students. Superintendent Forsten responded that this is a seventh-grade science class, and that she had not heard of issues or concerns about this class. Mr. Richards then asked how some classes end up with larger enrollments, while others have 20 students. Superintendent Forsten noted that while this number distribution may not be ideal, it can often be attributed to the scheduling of classes such as music and other performing arts which are offered less frequently, thereby causing these students to end up in core classes which fit their schedules. She added that, overall, class sizes are excellent for a middle school of this size.

Concord High School

This year, CHS had a decrease in its total enrollment of 21 students. Using the demographic report from January 2019, a continuing decrease in enrollment is projected. High school average class sizes are well within policy guidelines. Five classes have fewer than 15 students and one class has more than 30 students. At CHS, there are 389 class sections that support the departments, as well as Art, Business, Tech Ed, Digital Ed, Music, Reading, Wellness, Life Studies and English Language Learning. CHS has 139 ELL students, 5 of whom are new this year, making up 9% of the total student population.

Two hundred twenty special education students make up 14% of the total student population.

CHS Principal Tom Sica reviewed high school enrollment trends, noting a projected continued decrease in enrollment. He described the emphasis by faculty and staff on engaging with students and helping them take post-high school career plans and goals into consideration during class registration, which took place before February break. He emphasized the nuances of building a master schedule that takes into consideration student requests, faculty availability, and making specialized courses available to the greatest number of students.

Mr. Sica reviewed current course enrollment numbers, noting several changes, including students who have moved out of the District or graduated early. He again described the ongoing challenge of building a schedule that serves both students and staff. He highlighted the Student Help Desk, which functions as an internship model, providing students with hands-on experience working with real-life tech issues in the building, as well as creating instructional materials and tutorials for students and staff. Chuck Crush asked about the Diploma Academy. Superintendent Forsten explained that Diploma Academy is part of CHS, headed by Carol Lundin, that provides alternate, innovative paths of access to students who need additional time or help with their high school courses. Some of these classes happen outside of the school day and are taught both by CHS and external staff.

Mr. Sica reviewed high school subject enrollments, including English, Science, Math, Performing Arts, and electives. He noted that English courses are heterogeneously grouped in an effort to create a well-blended cross section of CHS students in each class section. While reviewing the numbers, he explained that class size variations often occur as a result of other classes scheduled at the same time. He reviewed senior class electives, using the example of the *Great Authors, Great Works* course to explain how similar electives with low enrollments are occasionally combined into one course. Nancy Kane asked if literature and language electives are available only to seniors. Mr. Sica explained that these electives were added in the mid- to late-90s as a way to replace a standardized twelfth-grade English course and allow seniors choices in the type of courses they wanted to focus on. He added that some spaces are open to underclassmen, depending on availability. Mr. Richards asked about digital technology-focused electives such as coding, wondering if more should be offered. Mr. Sica explained that overall enrollment in coding and tech courses has trended down in the last several years, and class offerings have reflected that trend. Assistant Superintendent Donna Palley added that technology and coding skills are now often starting earlier in children's education, sometimes as early as elementary school. Mr. Sica noted that many technology skills are rolled organically into other courses, such as podcasts in English classes. Mr. Sica then described flex periods, a resource that allows students who may need additional help to receive support and enrichment, with the goal of trying to capture students who might be struggling, before any issues become serious. He noted overall decreased enrollment in Spanish, and new course offerings in sculpture and the science of sustainability. Barb Higgins asked if staff numbers are driven by enrollment; Superintendent Forsten responded that they are. Ms.

Kane asked how the decision is made to add AP courses. Mr. Sica explained that student interest is the major driver; Ms. Palley added that requests often come from the departments, based on observed trends and student interest. Mr. Richards asked if independent study options exist in cases when a student is interested in a particular elective, but there is insufficient interest or enrollment for a full class to be offered. Mr. Sica explained that this does happen sometimes, and that these students often do related online coursework and that some teachers help provide alternate paths.

CRTC Director Steve Rothenberg provided an overview of the CRTC program, explaining that it is responsible for the largest geographic region in New Hampshire, with a wide array of students. He explained some of the nuances and challenges of running a successful CRTC program, including student recruitment, prospect management, relationship maintenance with sending schools, and managing trends. The enrollment target for CRTC is 682 students; there are currently applications in from 788 students. Enrollment continues to be very strong in the Health Science, Automotive Technology and Teacher Preparation programs. In Health Science, there are 53 more requests for enrollment than there are seats available. In Teacher Preparation, there are 20 more requests for enrollment than there are seats available. In Automotive Technology, there are 16 more requests than seats available.

CRTC enrollment is up about 30%, and enrollment numbers change as students apply within different windows of time that are not as concrete as registration dates at CHS. Mr. Rothenberg explained the need to recruit students and noted the use of a “drip model,” a multi-layered approach that includes middle school summer camps, brochures, road shows and preview days to recruit ninth and tenth grade students. He added that being in the news is also important, as this helps get the CRTC story told via the success of its students. Mr. Rothenberg reviewed enrollment trends, noting that Health Sciences continues to grow, with 53 more requests for enrollment than there are seats available. He also pointed out a decreasing trend in Culinary Arts and Cosmetology. Mr. Rothenberg explained that he is constantly trying to adapt CRTC programs to fit both economic reality and career field needs. Pam Wicks asked if there are alternate placement options for students interested in programs that do not have enough interest or enrollment; Mr. Rothenberg explained that by law, alternate placement is provided for these students. He noted there are transportation and logistical challenges for these options. He emphasized the particular challenge of transportation and scheduling when the current class programming is the shortest in the state, with only 1.5 hours per day, noting that Maine and Vermont programs are 3 hours per day. He emphasized a need to rethink career technical education, as the current model is limiting. He said the first step would be to increase funding.

Superintendent Forsten asked Board members for feedback in preparation for the open session on Wednesday, March 13. Mr. Crush asked for a detailed analysis of all new positions that are being added, including administrative and instructional, along with a breakdown of any positions that are being eliminated, and a total cost estimate for all the above. Ms. Kane asked for more detailed information on the Communications Director position, including experiences and best practices from other districts, along with other

options for delivering this kind of service, and how to evaluate it. Mr. Richards asked Mr. Dunn for a history of use of the Trust Fund. Mr. Crush made note of the increase in special education funding and requested a synopsis of where this increase comes from. Tom Croteau and Ms. Kane asked for clearly delineated bullet points explaining the roles and responsibilities of the Assistant Principals, including which roles these would replace, which roles and tasks they would inherit, and which new roles and tasks the District could expect from those positions. Both noted a need to emphasize this information clearly. Mr. Crush asked for discussion and explanation of how budgets continue to increase year after year if student enrollment continues to trend downward. Ms. Wicks emphasized that the state's adequacy funding provides the district \$3,600 per student, but that the actual costs are anywhere from \$11,000 to upward of \$20,000 per student. She noted that it would be helpful to explain and demonstrate a student's day-to-day classroom experience.

Mr. Croteau opened the meeting for public comment.

Concord resident Carl Sargent stated that he believes the budget should allocate more money for enrichment services and activities.

Mr. Dunn reminded the public that a full list of meeting dates, future budget sessions, materials and Board member contact information are available on the District website.

The Board voted 8-0 to adjourn (moved by Ms. Kane, seconded by Mr. Crush).

The meeting adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Richards, *Secretary*
Lauren Hynds, *Recorder*