

Concord School District
School Board Work Session #5 – Student Services
March 5, 2020

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

Board member absent: Barb Higgins

Administration: Dr. Frank Bass, *Interim Superintendent*, Donna Palley, *Assistant Superintendent*, Jack Dunn, *Business Administrator*

Jennifer Patterson called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m., noting that the work session would cover student services and the Board would vote to post a budget for the purpose of public hearings. Dr. Bass reviewed the agenda: discussion of the elementary Assistant Principal (AP) positions, discussion of the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), a review of proposed new positions, out-of-district (OOD) placements, contracted services (William White Educational Consulting – WWEC), and the vote to post a budget. He noted that two candidates were being considered for the School Compliance Officer position; both had legal backgrounds and were exciting prospects.

ADS Principal Anthony Blinn, CMS Principal Kris Gallo and CMS Assistant Principal Carol McCarthy commented. Principal Blinn said that the purpose of that group was to review the value added by the elementary APs to their school communities. Dr. Bass described the background, interests and abilities (BIA) index, which takes those factors into consideration when determining where someone would fit in the paradigm of the school administration. He noted that these responsibilities could shift across a continuum, with what occurred in a building at particular time. He emphasized that the primary functions of the Assistant Principals were leadership, supervision, and evaluation and that it was the Principals' duty to assign their APs in a way that fit the building's needs. Principal Blinn described universal expectations and the emphasis on student services. Principal Gallo added that her background in mathematics and Assistant Principal McCarthy's background in literacy complemented each other at CMS. Dr. Bass emphasized that Principals were the educational leader of a school and that the Assistant Principals enabled this with robust ancillary support. He described the varied day of an Assistant Principal in the changing nature of an elementary school environment. Assistant Principal McCarthy noted that the majority of her and the other APs' days were focused on student services, supporting students with behavioral challenges and supporting special education staff.

Chuck Crush asked whether APs spent much time with paraprofessionals. Principal Blinn explained that at ADS, he and Assistant Principal Laura-Beth Ulwick had identified which staff were student services, and that those numbers came out evenly in terms of supervision and evaluation. Assistant Principal McCarthy noted that she scheduled

paraprofessionals and student matching at CMS and provided some direct training. Tom Croteau asked what the Principals could do now with an AP that they could not do without. Principal Blinn noted that he dedicated more time to staff evaluation, and curriculum and instruction development. CMS Principal Gallo noted that she spent more time in classrooms and was more visible to and interactive with staff and students. BGS Principal Susan Lauze noted that she more closely reviewed student data to develop effective instruction strategies as well as provided more feedback to staff, and that paraprofessionals received more support with the addition of the APs. Jim Richards asked whether some tasks previously performed by the former Special Education Coordinators had fallen by the wayside after those positions were eliminated in favor of APs. Principal Blinn noted that, in his experience, it had been a positive change at ADS, as Ms. Ulwick had been a part-time Special Education Coordinator and that her tasks had often fallen behind due to her being “spread too thin.” Principal Gallo echoed these comments and added that she felt Assistant Principal McCarthy’s split role between two schools should have been two full-time positions, and that she was much better able now to perform her duties and be more active and engaged with students. Principal Lauze noted her similar experience and added that Assistant Principal Nancy Pender was able to spend more time getting to know students and their needs. All Principals agreed that parent contact had been much smoother and quicker throughout the day.

David Parker asked what could be done moving forward that was proactive, rather than only addressing what problems could be fixed. Dr. Bass agreed that there had been a great deal of reactive positioning, due to it being the first year with APs and determining where they fit into the leadership structure. Mr. Parker commented that the APs should be used for the benefit of the District as much as possible. Ms. Patterson noted that one of the Superintendent’s priorities, as identified by the community, was mentoring and developing leaders, and that this was important in the context of the APs.

Mr. Croteau asked for a definition of “LEA.” Assistant Principal McCarthy explained that this stands for Local Education Agency, or school district, and that every special education/504 meeting must have someone in attendance as an LEA representative to take responsibility on behalf of the District. Gina Cannon asked how the APs made the students’ day different and how they directly benefited students. Principal Blinn emphasized an increased ability to be visible and that overall connections with students had improved. He used an example when he and Assistant Principal Ulwick had been able to evenly split up responsibilities with conflicting, concurrent issues. Dr. Bass emphasized the ability to get to know students and families better, to aid in making good decisions and developing better solutions. Principal Gallo provided examples of Assistant Principal McCarthy’s ability to meet with students and teachers to monitor progress and determine educational goals. Principal Lauze noted that Assistant Principal Pender was able to work directly with students more frequently and get to know them, building those relationships. Dr. Bass emphasized the importance of Principals building relationships with students to become a significant part of their support system. Mr. Croteau voiced his support of the APs, noting that more support for teachers and other staff would create happier schools.

Dr. Bass reviewed the proposed new nursing positions: one FT floating nurse and a shared .5 LPN for MBS and BGS, noting an overall need for additional nurse resources as well as better communication and coordination, particularly during staff sick days and absences. He explained the importance of utilizing the District's existing nurse resources as efficiently as possible. Ms. Patterson expressed her support and appreciation for the nurses and their important work. In response to a question about whether someone at Central Office helped coordinate the nurses, Dr. Bass noted that he and Jack Dunn would discuss who would make sense to take on this role. In response to a question whether it made economic sense to add another floating nurse rather than use an agency, Dr. Bass noted that the issue was less about cost and more that nursing agencies were understaffed and simply unable to provide nurses. In response to a question about how school nursing had changed and what kind of needs nurses now provide, MBS school nurse Janet Corkum explained that most schools had several medically fragile students who required intense daily care: diabetic children who required frequent monitoring; severe allergies; or seizure disorders. Other nurses added that there was constant parent contact throughout the day, maintenance of medical equipment and documentation of every daily task performed. She noted the stress of trying to ensure good care for the children in the face of such busy schools and understaffing. They noted that any emergency issue such as a student fight, asthma attack, seizure or anaphylactic reaction required immediate prioritization, especially when there was only one nurse in the building. They explained that student health and wellness was every school nurse's top priority and that they wanted to make sure students were safe and got the care they needed, adding that nurses were often children's only source of healthcare. Additionally, there were sometimes students from other countries with unique healthcare needs, and were many more daily student medications to administer and track. Dr. Bass suggested a per diem FT floating nurse position could help with the workload. Ms. Patterson agreed that the Board should discuss additional options for nursing needs.

Ms. Palley reviewed the MTSS and emphasized that students were needier now, in terms of health and behavioral issues. She explained which practices support which tiers:

Tier 1 practices (a sampling):

- Responsive classroom
- Specialized curriculums and targeted lessons (dinosaur at preschool level; MTSS Tier 1 team-designed)
- Calming corners in classrooms
- Use of therapy dog
- Advisory program
- Zones of regulation program
- Mindfulness in classrooms
- Birth-five family centers
- Family voice/engagement
- After-school programs

Tier 2 programs (a sampling):

- Various evidence-based small group interventions
 - Coping cat (anxiety)
 - CICO (check-in/check-out)
 - Social skills groups
 - Cognitive behavioral intervention for trauma groups
 - Bereavement groups – Riverbend
 - Dialectical behavior therapy – Riverbend (mindfulness, emotional regulation)
- Silent mentors (1:1 relationship building)
- Student assistance program (substance misuse prevention/intervention)
- Student support room (SSR)

Tier 3 programs (a sampling):

- Individualized plans (IEP, behavior support) implemented (special education, behavioral support, related services) with various consultation and assessment supports
- Specialized intensive programs, (elementary, middle, high)
- Diploma Academy programs
- 1:1 support from District or WWEC staff
- Wraparound services

Ms. Palley described the new proposed student service positions and the tasks they would perform:

- Two Social Workers – for the BMS/3R program, and CMS/ADS

Qualifications

- Master-level specialist in school social work or eligible for certification as a school social worker, with relevant experience

Would provide:

- Effective prevention and intervention with individuals, families, schools, and community within a strength-based model at Tiers 1, 2 and 3
- Assessment of student social, emotional, and behavioral skills, both formally and informally, to identify student strengths and needs.
- Collaboration with classroom teams and school staff to build positive classroom and school community.
- Partnership with families and others to resolve challenges in the home, school, and community. Connecting parents to community-based services and social services
- Individual and group counseling
- Crisis intervention and other mental health services;
- Development of positive behavioral intervention strategies for all students
- Collaboration, consultation, and coordination as leaders or members of interdisciplinary teams and community partnerships

- 1 Family Home Visitor

Home visiting: a prevention strategy to support parents to promote infant and child health, foster educational development and school readiness, and help prevent child abuse and neglect

Research on home visiting programs shows positive impact on reducing incidents of child abuse and neglect; improved school readiness for children; increased high school graduation rates for mothers

Cost-benefit analyses show that high-quality home visiting programs offer high returns on investment for every dollar spent, due to reduced costs of child protection, K–12 special education, and criminal justice expenses

Qualifications

- Master-level clinical certification, specializing in behavioral, mental health and parent education services. Experience in implementing evidence-based early childhood home visiting service delivery models

Would provide:

- High-quality home visiting program for children at risk, referred through Concord Family Center programs and partners.
 - Support for the development of healthy parent–child relationships through education and mentoring
 - Support and problem-solving to parents for behavioral health issues.
 - Facilitation of referrals to appropriate community agencies and programs
 - Skill training to empower parents to be their children’s first teacher and make/enhance connections with school
- 6 special education teachers (5 at elementary level; 1 at RMS)

Qualifications

- Certified teachers possessing expertise with students with significant social emotional and behavioral needs; background in trauma, social-emotional learning, applied behavior analysis, psychology

Would provide:

- Direct instruction to students in need, both identified and non-identified in Tiers 2 and 3
- Assessments of student social/emotional learning needs
- Tier 2 and 3 team participation
- Team member participation in development of positive behavior support plans
- Implementation of behavior plans
- Classroom collaboration, including in classrooms with students
- Other service provider collaboration, inside and outside of school
- Ongoing data to monitor the progress of students
- Family contact to support student growth

- Ongoing support and training for educational assistants
- .4 Occupational Therapist
 - To provide services at Broken Ground and Rundlett Middle School. OTs:
 - use meaningful activities to help children/youth participate in school
 - promote physical and emotional well-being
 - address physical, cognitive, psychosocial and sensory aspects of performance
 - focus on academic, play, social participation, self-care skills and transition/work skills
 - perform environmental analysis and modification to reduce barriers

Ms. Patterson noted that in the interest of time, the OOD placement and WWEC contracted service discussion would be discussed at the next meeting.

She explained that, in Concord, the Board both proposed and voted on the District budget, rather than the community voting on it. She emphasized that the budget voted to post was not final and was open for discussion before the Board's final vote on March 26.

Mr. Parker suggested that schools were gradually becoming clinics, with OTs, nurses, doctors, etc. He asked if the Board and administration were seeing the big picture, and if these activities were really within the District's role or responsibility. He said he felt it was important to avoid a "slippery slope," whereby schools would be turned into hospitals.

Mr. Croteau noted that last year, the elementary Special Education Coordinators were replaced by Assistant Principals, and that he would like to see a breakdown of the items performed by the coordinators compared to had been done by the Assistant Principals.

Ms. Cannon asked how much of the .4 proposed OT would be Medicaid-reimbursable. Ms. Palley responded that she would review those numbers at the next meeting.

Several of the schools' Occupational Therapists (OTs) – Victoria Hopkins, Audrey Knapp, and Karen Baxter – shared their experiences and described how their days were spent. They emphasized the intense needs of today's students and explained that they provided services for 250 students District-wide, from pre-k through age 21, who had a number of diagnoses, complex medical and social-emotional needs. They provided Board members with information about school OTs.

Ms. Patterson opened the meeting for public comment.

Concord resident and 58-year taxpayer Betty Hoadley noted various nearby communities, their median income and poverty levels, explaining that the median household income in Concord was \$62,000, with 10.2% of families below the poverty level. She added that Concord was a magnet for nonprofit organizations, including schools, churches and state buildings, and that around 16% - or 1/6 – the Concord population was aged 65 or older. Ms. Hoadley emphasized that it was critical to consider needy community populations living on fixed incomes, and reminded Board members that there were needy people in all segments of the population, both young and old. She noted that it had been since 2011 that the Board charter was examined and that it would not be wise to irritate the community so close to a reexamination of the charter.

Mr. Dunn reviewed the budget to post and its tax impact, noting that the line item budget – which included everything that had been presented about the budget so far – was posted on the District website, along with Board member contact information.

BUDGET TO POST

| FUND | FY20 | FY21 - PROPOSED | CHANGE (\$) |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| General Fund | | | |
| - Operations Excluding Debt Service | 77,199,008 | 80,645,230 | 3,446,222 |
| - Operations Debt Service | 6,471,391 | 6,212,187 | -259,204 |
| - Transfer to Facilities and Renovation Trust | 729,170 | 1,417,746 | 688,576 |
| - Transfer to School Bldg. Maint. Trust | 85,000 | 98,665 | 13,665 |
| - Transfer to Vocational Reserve | 157,804 | 193,918 | 36,114 |
| - Transfer to Special Education Trust | 362,801 | 0 | -362,801 |
| - Transfer to Technology Innovation Trust | 250,000 | 0 | -250,000 |
| - Transfer to Food Service | 50,000 | 20,000 | -30,000 |
| - Transfer to Energy Risk Reserve | 0 | | 0 |
| Total General Fund* | 85,306,147 | 88,587,746 | 3,281,599 |
| Food Service Fund | 1,951,883 | 1,968,514 | 16,631 |
| Grant Fund | 3,386,198 | 3,600,200 | 214,002 |
| CRTC Capital Fund (<i>spending for FY21</i>) | 110,000 | 125,000 | 15,000 |
| TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS | 90,754,228 | 94,281,460 | 3,527,232 |
| PROJECTED TAX IMPACT SUMMARY | | | |
| Projected City Valuation (real growth) | .77% or \$30,423,041 | | |
| Tax Rate (local) | \$13.61 per thousand or 2.64% | | |
| Tax Rate (state) Fixed Amount | \$1.99 per thousand or -2.93% | | |
| Tax Rate (local and state combined) | \$15.60 per thousand or 1.89% | | |

He noted that upcoming Public Hearings were published in the *Concord Monitor*:

- Public Hearing #1 – Mill Brook School (53 S. Curtisville Road)
Monday, March 16, 2020
7:00 p.m., Multi-purpose room
- Public Hearing #2 – Rundlett Middle School (144 South Street)
Thursday, March 19, 2020
5:30 p.m., Multi-purpose room

Ms. Patterson again noted that the posted budget would not be final; it was the basis for public comment and Board discussion. Changes could be made as necessary.

Mr. Dunn provided a schedule of the upcoming budget work sessions.

2020-2021 BUDGET WORK SESSION SCHEDULE

| DATE | DAY | TIME | LOCATION | TOPIC | NOTE |
|------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------------------------|--|--|
| March 5 th | Thursday | 5:30pm | Central Office – Board Room | WS#5: OPEN SESSION & POST Budget | ** POST BUDGET ** |
| March 9 th | Monday | 5:30pm | Central Office – Board Room | WS#6: OPEN SESSION | |
| March 12 th | Thursday | 5:30pm | Central Office – Board Room | WS#7: CHS and CRTC Enrollments | |
| March 16th | Monday | 7:00pm | MILL BROOK SCHOOL | WS#8: PUBLIC HEARING #1 | |
| March 19th | Thursday | 5:30pm | RUNDLETT MIDDLE SCHOOL | WS#9: PUBLIC HEARING #2 | |
| March 23 rd | Monday | 5:45pm | Central Office – Board Room | WS#10: OPEN SESSION | |
| March 26 th | Thursday | 5:30pm | Central Office – Board Room | WS#11: OPEN SESSION & FINALIZE FY21 BUDGET | ** 5 VOTES IN THE AFFIRMATIVE TO PASS** |

BOLD: Action Meetings | BOLD & UNDERLINE: Public Hearings

Mr. Croteau proposed the following motion. Liza Poinier seconded:

That the Board vote to post the Preliminary 2020-2021 Fiscal year budget for public comment with all funds of \$94,281,460, with a general fund budget of \$88,587,746 appropriating \$54,201,661 in local taxes and \$7,495,955 in state taxes inclusive of the following, deposits, and withdrawals to existing funds or expendable trust funds:

Deposits

- Vocational Capital Reserve Fund for an amount up to \$193,918
- Facilities and Renovation Trust Fund for an amount up to \$1,417,746
- Food Service Fund for an amount up to \$20,000
- Renovation and Maintenance Trust Fund for an amount up to \$98,665

and also inclusive of the following withdrawals from expendable trust funds to fund appropriations:

1. Special Education Expendable Trust Fund for an amount up to \$100,000;
2. Vocational Capital Reserve for an amount up to \$125,000;
3. Instructional Trust Fund for an amount up to \$50,000;
4. Health Risk Management Reserve for an amount up to \$100,000

Mr. Crush noted that the Board needed to consider the large number of proposed new positions and that, while he agreed all were needed, suggested there were opportunities to secure savings elsewhere in the budget.

Mr. Croteau emphasized for the community that the best way to contact the Board was to email members, and that all contact information was on the District website. He said that constituent emails were always read and discussed.

Mr. Parker remarked that the Board had a responsibility to consider the constraints of taxpayers and properly manage the fiscal house. He felt that the work done by District staff was very good, but that the Board needed to consider taxpayer finances when

contemplating adding so many new positions. He stated that the budget required further scrutiny, as the District and Board had to act responsibly on behalf of the community.

Ms. Patterson emphasized that the Board took budget planning very seriously and public comment was taken into consideration. She added that it was important to be reminded of the needs of both the schools and taxpayer constituencies; that this process was done publicly every year and was a difficult task.

Mr. Dunn clarified that the increase in the tax rate was 2.64%, not over 4%, as mentioned earlier in the meeting.

Mr. Richards cautioned Board members to examine one-time tax savings in this budget which would not carry over in future years, emphasizing that added positions would carry over.

Dr. Bass stated that he would like the opportunity to adjust the budget based on the District's needs and that he would like to trim items, and be more judicious with what was presented to the Board.

**The Board voted 8-0 by roll call to post the budget as presented above
(motioned by Mr. Croteau, seconded by Ms. Poinier.)**

Mr. Croteau moved to adjourn.

The Board voted 8-0 to adjourn (motioned by Mr. Croteau, seconded by Mr. Crush).

The meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Patterson, *President*

Lauren Hynds, *Recorder*