

Concord School District  
**Special Board Meeting**  
June 10, 2020

Board President Jennifer Patterson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and read the following statement:

As President of the Concord School Board, I find that due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

The business we intend to conduct today is necessary due to the need to have a conversation about what steps the Board and the District will take to address discrimination. We will not take public comment today, but we will in the future as part of our focus on how to engage in a robust public conversation. We encourage the submission of comments via e-mail at: [concordinfo@sau8.org](mailto:concordinfo@sau8.org). There is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this meeting. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, we are:

a) Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access by other electronic means: we are utilizing *Microsoft Teams* for this meeting. All Board members have the ability to communicate contemporaneously through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone # (925) 391-1169, Conf ID: 452 161 660# by clicking on the link provided on the [sau8.org](http://sau8.org) website. The meeting will be broadcast contemporaneously on ConcordTV's education channel, and a recording of the meeting will be posted on the ConcordTV website.

b) Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting: we previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting, including how to access the meeting using *Microsoft Teams* or telephonically. The meeting and pertinent instructions were posted on the District website, [sau8.org](http://sau8.org), more than 24 hours prior to the meeting, and are highlighted at the top of the website.

c) Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the Board during the meeting if there are problems with access: if anyone has a problem, please call 603-513-9008.

All members will be participating remotely, and any votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by roll call vote. When each member states their presence, please also state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting, which is required under the Right-to-Know law.

**Board members present:** Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, David Parker, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, Jennifer Patterson, Barb Higgins (arrived later in the call)

**Board members absent:** Chuck Crush

**Administrators present:**

*Interim Superintendent Frank Bass, incoming Interim Superintendent Kathleen Murphy, Assistant Superintendent Donna Palley, Business Administrator Jack Dunn, School Safety Officer Karen Fischer-Anderson*

Ms. Patterson briefly reviewed the agenda, which was to update the Board on recent administration-led conversations regarding discrimination, and to provide the Board the opportunity to discuss next steps. She noted that this was an issue of deep concern to everyone; the Board had previously discussed racism and bullying; more recently, requests had come from the public about what the Board and the District would commit to do to address discrimination. She noted that CHS students had recently organized a “Black Lives Matter” march in Concord. She said the District, Board members as elected officials, and the community as a whole were faced with both opportunity and obligation to listen and to educate themselves on racism and discrimination. As a first step, there was a call on June 8 among a number of administrators, three Board members, and community members including students, teachers, and advocates. A significant focus of the conversation was how to take concrete steps to address these issues. She welcomed incoming interim Superintendent Kathleen Murphy, noting that her participation was enabling a seamless transition in terms of hearing the will from the Board and developing the action steps to address discrimination. This process will include talking and listening to staff, students and community members and using the expertise within the administration and outside it.

Interim Superintendent Bass noted that over twenty people, including several students, were on the call to discuss discrimination including racism, religious bias and sexism. Several explicit examples of discrimination were shared and discussed, leaving the disheartening realization that this issue pervaded the community. Participants realized that the challenge was to engage in relationships with people who might appear or sound or act differently from themselves, creating opportunities to learn and make better connections. Unconscious and overt bias were discussed. Participants contributed ideas about concrete steps that could be taken over time to address these issues.

Student Safety Compliance Officer Karen Fischer-Anderson, whose role includes ensuring that the District conducts effective training and policy development on nondiscrimination, described the call and several participants, including several who shared personal experiences of discrimination. She said that critical components to change were awareness, training and discussion, involving a variety of audiences: students, staff and parents. She suggested that viewing a number of YouTube videos on implicit bias and “micro-aggression” could be helpful to point out the impact of discriminatory comments. She noted that with significant changes to Title IX, processes and procedures to address discrimination and inequity that affect students’ ability to participate in school programs or activities were required to be enacted. She said she was working on a draft policy with regard to that requirement. The implementation date was August 14. The draft policy would include definition of terms, and both formal and informal grievance process.

Participants to the call also discussed the need to gather data to see whether there are disparate disciplinary outcomes at both the middle school and high school. Ms. Fischer-Anderson will analyze disciplinary reports from the last two years and look for any disproportionality in the outcomes based on specific infractions. Finally, she plans to work on developing a long-term “restorative justice” process; these have been shown to confer a significant educational and community benefit beyond sanctions typically imposed in disciplinary proceedings. She said she learned from the call the value of acknowledging that one may have made a mistake and how to handle it at the time it occurred.

Kathleen Murphy noted the talent and depth of experience expressed by participants on the call. These individuals could be of tremendous help in the ongoing discussions, and development of procedures and long-term planning, particularly in hiring.

Barb Higgins shared a recent experience with “micro-aggression” in a discussion with Stephanie Alicea, a woman of color, at a charter school.

David Parker, who as Vice Chair of the City and Community Relations Committee was one of the Board members who listened in on the June 8 call, said that everyone was implicitly biased in one way or another: gender bias, age bias, class bias, cultural bias, race bias, learning disability bias, mental health bias, social bias. He said human brains were biologically designed to consistently discriminate.

Ms. Patterson, who as Board President participated on the call, said she felt the Board had good opportunities, as elected officials, to do more than what could be done within the schools themselves. She said she would also like to work with City officials on this broader community issue.

Liza Poinier, who as Chair of the City and Community Relations Committee listened in on the call, commented that she agreed with one person on the call that short, regular, consistent education for students was important. Once a year training for staff would not have the same impact as having training available at, perhaps, five minutes per week. She mentioned other comments that characterized discrimination as an emergency similar to Covid-19, in terms of an opportunity to pull together to address it.

Gina Cannon commented that the choices about how to respond to the brain’s biological purpose of discrimination (differentiation) are taught. She said the Board would need to be very careful in how it describes trying to eradicate discrimination.

Ms. Fischer-Anderson said that denigration of another person, using “micro-aggressions,” could be subtle. It might not have been meant to be mean or hurtful, but could cause anger or pain in the person to whom it is delivered.

Ms. Higgins noted that she had invited Stephanie Alicea to attend the meeting.

Tom Croteau agreed there was a need for training by experts, with a focus on younger students initially, and that it would always need to involve trust-building.

Jim Richards reiterated how impressed he had been by the Black Lives Matter rally organized by CHS students a few days prior. He said he was moved by the speakers at that rally. He agreed that building trust in these conversations was critical, and that this needed

to be a continuous and ongoing process, and especially to include students who were interested in participating.

Superintendent Bass emphasized the importance of approaching this conversation from an educational perspective, for instance trying to transform a conversation about how ones' comments or actions might be received from an exclusionary to an inclusionary choice, allowing engagement with someone else and resulting in some kind of learning experience. He said the group that had been on the call would be writing a statement for publication.

Ms. Patterson suggested that the Board issue a statement; Ms. Higgins said there should be input from people experiencing discrimination. Mr. Parker recognized the positive efforts of the CHS students who organized the Black Lives Matter rally. He also said that a draft statement by Ms. Poinier was valuable; all Board members should review this. Ms. Cannon said there should be a statement, but specifics should not be included without input from those experiencing discrimination; it would have the potential to be misunderstood. She said everyone must recognize that there was no race diversity on the Board. Ms. Poinier said she would be interested in recruiting people from diverse backgrounds to stand for election to the Board.

Ms. Patterson summarized her sense of the Board's conversation: that there was support for the continuation of these calls, and for development of a plan and a statement that would come more organically from participants in the call, to be reviewed by the Board.

Ms. Poinier expressed a view that the Board's statement should be finalized soon, rather than after the next scheduled call with stakeholders on June 22; Ms. Cannon and other Board members agreed. Superintendent Bass said the Board's communication should be built on what Concord students are capable of doing, as they "lead the charge." Ms. Poinier read the draft statement aloud. Board members expressed support for the statement generally, with some discussion of wording, and agreed that it should be issued this week.

Adjournment

**The Board voted 8-0 to adjourn (motioned by Ms. Higgins, seconded by Mr. Richards).**

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barb Higgins, *Secretary*

Linden Jackett, *Recorder*