Concord School District  
Board of Education  
Joint Finance/Instructional Committee

**Date:** November 29, 2017

**Instructional Committee members present:** Alana Kimball, *Chair*; Maureen Redmond-Scura; Jennifer Patterson; Pam Wicks

**Finance Committee members present:** Tom Croteau, *Chair*; Jim Richards; Nathan Fennessy; Pam Wicks

**Other Board members present:** Clint Cogswell, Barb Higgins

**Administration:** Superintendent Terri Forsten, *Assistant Superintendent* Donna Palley, *Business Administrator* Jack Dunn

Tom Croteau chaired the meeting, which was a joint meeting of the Instructional and Finance Committees. The meeting was called to order at 5:38 p.m. The agenda included three topics: the proposed 2018-2019 school calendar; full-day kindergarten; and planning for the FY2019 budget.

**2018-2019 School Calendar**

A draft 2018-2019 calendar was presented. This draft had been shared and discussed with the union leadership and administrators. The calendar proposed two days for teaching staff at the beginning of the school year, before students begin, and one to two days for students in the first week of school. There would be no school on the Friday before Labor Day, providing a four-day weekend. Superintendent Forsten noted that families have traditionally looked for this long weekend, and other districts across the state have had similar calendars. The January professional development day was moved later in the month from a previous draft, and is now proposed for January 28.

*The Instructional Committee voted 4-0 (motioned by Jennifer Patterson, seconded by Maureen Redmond-Scura) to recommend the proposed calendar to the full School Board for its consideration on December 4, 2017.*

**Full Day Kindergarten**

Superintendent Forsten reviewed information about full-day kindergarten that had been previously shared at various meetings in the last few years. The summary of findings from the Board’s Early Childhood Education Steering Committee, which met during the 2015-2016 school year, was shared. The Committee pointed to research that found positive outcomes for young children participating in quality programs that use developmentally appropriate practices. It was noted that the District and community providers offer a wide array of early childhood educational offerings for families. The cost associated to implement full-day kindergarten was approximately $1 million.
annually at the time of the Committee’s report. In the short-term, space was identified as available, but some disruption to the current configuration of preschool programs was possible. Loss of revenue for community preschool and childcare centers would negatively impact some providers.

Superintendent Forsten noted that there was an interest in providing kindergarten to “level the playing field” for all students. Program development would be based on child development research, including a focus on developmentally appropriate practices. Superintendent Forsten noted the District’s commitment to a program that would develop students’ physical, social, intellectual and emotional skills. Kindergarten teachers would be provided with a 45-minute daily preparation period, supported by an activity program for students involving itinerant staff.

Superintendent Forsten reviewed classroom spaces for kindergarten in the four schools. A chart was shared that provided details about the number of classrooms available, the number used currently, the number that would be used if full-day kindergarten was implemented, and the number of classrooms remaining available for other activities, including Title 1 and special education.

Two classrooms at Abbot-Downing School (ADS), Beaver Meadow School (BMS) and Christa McAuliffe School (CMS) are currently used for kindergarten. It was anticipated that three classrooms would be needed for full-day kindergarten in these buildings. This space is available, and would leave room for the Capital Region Technical Center (CRTC) program to remain at ADS. There was some increase in enrollment at CMS, so kindergarten and first grade enrollments in that building and also at ADS would be monitored. The kindergarten and first grade registration process would be opened after the winter break to gather enrollment information for next year as early as possible.

Classroom space at Mill Brook School (MBS) was predicted to be the tightest, and would most likely result in a need to move some or all of the preschool from MBS. Ms. Patterson noted that the Board wished to keep preschool at MBS if possible. Superintendent Forsten predicted that enrollment at MBS could result in the need for five kindergarten classrooms and six first and second grade classrooms. This would leave some space available in both the first and second grade wings, although kindergarten cannot use the second floor for classroom space due to safety regulations. The first grade classrooms could be used, although it was noted that these do not have in-classroom bathrooms as are found in the other kindergarten classrooms.

Superintendent Forsten noted that preschool was a District rather than a neighborhood program, and that there would be room for preschool at other schools, if needed. In past years, the preschool program was housed at various schools across the city, including at Eastman School (ES). Eastman School could potentially be used for preschool, although this would require some administrative presence in the building; the Preschool Coordinator is not an administrator. Broken Ground School (BGS) was predicted to need a total of 17 classrooms, with a smaller third grade class moving to
the building next year. There would be one available classroom at BGS based on current predictions.

Some special education and Title 1 programs would need to tighten up their use of space in the elementary schools, which has become more relaxed as space has been available. This space issue would be something to consider in the long-term as the Board plans for middle school.

Assistant Superintendent Donna Palley spoke about the kindergarten schedule and curriculum, beginning with a review of the ten signs of a good kindergarten from the National Association for the Education of Young Children. She compared the current part-day program schedule with a sample full-day schedule and highlighted the content areas and their expanded time along with their connection to activity times. Ms. Redmond-Scura asked about the 60-minute literacy block and wondered about kindergarten students sitting for that long a period. Ms. Palley assured that these blocks of time do not involve sitting for 60 minutes; they are filled with movement and a variety of literacy-related activities. Nathan Fennessy asked about recess and lunch; whether the schools would schedule lunch and snack time further apart and whether Principals had thought about adding kindergarten to the lunch period. Ms. Palley indicated that principals have been thinking about supporting appropriate snack and lunch periods as well as overall scheduling.

Ms. Palley introduced a proposal for an “Activity Time” concept that has been redeveloped since the last presentation. During this daily activity time for kindergarten students, their teachers have 45 minutes for preparation. A team that would include a certified teacher (early childhood or elementary) and three program assistants would come to a school and work in three classrooms at a time. Students would engage in a variety of activities over the year, including STEAM activities, read-aloud stories, song and movement activities, inside and outside creative play, and more. This proposal was based on the very similar Project SEE, which provides science instruction while teachers have time for collaboration and professional development opportunities. Ms. Palley noted that the full-time art, music and physical education teachers do not have time to allow additional classes (kindergarten) to be added to their schedules. Several Committee members spoke in support of the presented model, noting that it would provide students with developmentally appropriate activities, was based on another successful model in the district, and would allow for students to have a daily interaction with one individual versus three different specialists.

Information about elementary enrollment was presented. The current projection for kindergarten enrollment was 300. It was anticipated that there would be a need for one fewer classroom teacher at BMS, where there are currently four fifth grade sections, with a need for only three next year. Mr. Fennessy suggested working with community providers to develop a trendline regarding student enrollment over time.

Information about projected savings, revenue and costs related to kindergarten was presented. Superintendent Forsten indicated that there was the potential to save
approximately $75,000 by eliminating the mid-day bus runs associated with part-day kindergarten. An additional approximately $330,000 in adequacy funding based on receiving $1100 for each of 300 kindergarten students in a full-day program was anticipated. There could be additional funding from the state related to Keno, but not until the following year, and there was no guarantee that funds would become available. Business Administrator Jack Dunn and Ms. Patterson commented that the $1100 was a guarantee in the biennial budget, but the administration would seek additional clarification on this. A cost range for several categories of expenses was presented. 7.5 kindergarten teachers would require between $464,655 and $682,500, depending on their years of service and benefits. The cost for an itinerant teacher, with benefits, would range between $61,000 and $91,000. The cost for program assistants would range from $97,221 to $107,283. Converting part-day educational assistants to full-day would cost approximately $165,000. It was noted that this would likely result in a small increase in Medicaid reimbursement. Furniture, supplies and equipment would cost from $105,000 to $165,000.

The estimated local cost for converting from a part-day to a full-day program next year, taking into consideration the transportation savings and additional state revenue, would be between $507,895 and $824,848.

FY 19 budget

Mr. Dunn noted that the Board was in a stronger financial situation going into the next budget than it was a year ago, indicating that there were positive aspects to waiting for one year to bring forward full-day kindergarten. There would be no change in retirement costs from this year to next, compared to 11-17% increases the previous year. Only a 1.2% increase in health costs compared to 4.5% last year was anticipated. Community education debt would not be seen, as that program was planned to move out of the budget. The steam to gas situation was settled, with significantly lower costs for gas heat expected compared to the cost of steam heat. Additional adequacy aide for kindergarten would partly offset those program costs.

Clint Cogswell noted that, without previous Boards’ decisions to set funds aside for capital expenditures, the Board would not have been able to complete the elementary school building project without a much more significant impact on taxpayers. He stated he would like to work toward a budget for kindergarten at the lower end of the projected range to allow funds to be put away for future facility projects. Jim Richards agreed that funds should be set aside, and further noted that more funds would be needed for the next building project, as building aid helped mitigate costs to the community for the elementary schools.

Mr. Fennessy asked about setting aside funds to support possible increases in retirement costs in the future. Mr. Dunn indicated that he would not recommend this step at this time, though he noted that downshifting from the state is significant. Ms. Redmond-Scura spoke to the concern about Concord’s tax base, noting that only
approximately 72% of properties are taxable in Concord, compared to other
communities where that percentage is much higher.

Mr. Dunn spoke to various proposals under consideration as the FY19 budget was
developed. On the expenditure side, he noted that negotiations have begun with five
groups. The administration may recommend moving the Food Service Director’s salary
to the District budget. Additional expenditures would be reflected in the area of
technology, with some new Chromebooks and teacher laptops needed. The District’s
telephone system would need to be replaced soon, although it was hoped that it could
be maintained for at least one more year. Two roof projects are likely to come forward.
A significant grant would be ending this year (Safe Schools); there would be capital
lease costs; and a continued commitment to the stabilization fund. Ms. Redmond-Scura
asked about expenditures for special education. Superintendent Forsten responded
that this information is not yet known.

Mr. Dunn discussed revenues related to the next budget, including an increase (by
about $800 per student) in Deerfield tuition, a decrease in facility rental as Girls Inc.
has left E5, and preschool reductions of about $12,000. He also noted revenue issues
relative to the balance of bond proceeds, adequacy funds, Medicaid and the possible
impact of aid for charter schools.

Mr. Dunn reviewed new proposals that the Board may be asked to consider, including
implementing a technology fee for students, revisiting other fees (for example, athletic
fees) and kindergarten tuition.

Several Board members spoke to the issue of charging tuition for kindergarten.
Members noted the equity issues involved with setting a tuition. Mr. Croteau noted
that it would be possible to use some Title 1 funds for this purpose, but this would take
these funds away from other students who require Title 1 remedial services. Mr.
Fennessy noted that, if tuition was charged to allow for a full-day program, a part-day
program would also have to be offered, and this would not be desirable. Ms.
Redmond-Scura pointed out that there are districts in the state who charge tuition for
the full day.

The Finance Committee voted 4-0 (motioned by Ms. Wicks, seconded by Mr.
Richards) to recommend a proposal that the District not charge tuition for
full-day kindergarten to the full School Board for its consideration at the
December 4, 2017 meeting.

The Finance Committee voted 4-0 (motioned by Mr. Croteau, seconded by
Mr. Fennessy) to move full-day kindergarten programming forward as part
of the FY2019 budget proposal to the full School Board for its consideration
at the December 4, 2017 meeting.

Betty Hoadley, a Concord resident, spoke to the Committees, expressing the hope that
the Board understood that by including the cost of full-day kindergarten in the next
budget, they should also cut other spending and increase revenue. She urged the
members not to develop a budget that would raise taxes for the community.

The Committee voted 7-0 to adjourn (motioned by Mr. Richards, seconded by
Ms. Redmond-Scura).

The meeting was adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Croteau Chair
Donna Palley, Recorder