Concord School District
Board of Education

Instructional Committee Meeting

Date: October 24, 2018

Committee members present: Maureen Redmond-Scura, Chair; Clint Cogswell, Liza Poinier, Pam Wicks

Other Board members present: Jim Richards, Jennifer Patterson, Tom Croteau

District staff present: Superintendent Terri Forsten; Assistant Superintendent Donna Palley;

Committee Chair Maureen Redmond-Scura called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. The agenda included the presentation of calendar proposals for the 2019-2020 school year, and class size updates, review and consideration.

2019-2020 School District Calendar

Superintendent Forsten reviewed several factors that are considered when constructing the school-year calendar, including 177 school days for students, and 6 additional work days for teachers. In addition, there is an attempt to provide for uninterrupted stretches of days and weeks for continuity of teaching, and consistent opening days for students. The administration is also mindful of the potential need to make up snow days in mid-to late June. It is typical for 4-7 snow days to occur.

The Committee reviewed two potential calendars. Option A included August 26 as the start date for teachers and August 27 as the first student day. This reflects what has become a traditional start of the year for the District. In this option, the last day of school would be June 11, assuming no snow days. Graduation day would be Saturday, June 13.

Calendar Option B would begin after Labor Day, with teachers starting on September 3 and students beginning on September 4. School would end on June 17.

Neither option would provide for two work days for teachers before school starts up and also provide at least two days of school for students in the first week. It was noted that kindergarten had a two-day start-up, with half the class starting on the first day and the other half on the second. All students attend the third day. Freshmen at Concord High had the first day to themselves, with upper classmen starting on the second day. Rundlett offered the morning of the first day for six graders alone, with the seventh and eighth graders attending in the afternoon.

The six teacher work days beyond student days are used as follows: one day before school starts, one day each in October, November, January and March, and one day split between several evenings for parent-teacher conferences.

Superintendent Forsten had a preliminary meeting with the CEA President to present the two options. He will seek input from teachers and provide her with feedback next week.
Pam Wicks suggested that the District consider a survey of families to gain input about calendar preferences. Others agreed this would be a good idea, perhaps at the end of the school year, given the current constraints. Several members indicated a preference for Option A. It was noted that beginning after Labor Day might result in a school year that went much later into June, causing students to miss opportunities for summer programs, especially those in other parts of the country. It can also be hot in buildings in late June. In addition, Committee members liked having two to three student days of school in the first week, rather than one or two.

Once input has been received from the CEA, the calendar will go forward to the full Board at the November meeting.

The Committee voted 4-0 to recommend Option A of the school calendar to the full Board, with input from the CEA (motioned by Ms. Wicks, seconded by Liza Poinier).

Class Size Information

Superintendent Forsten provided information about class size. The Board’s average class size objectives (Policy 641) outline the following:

- **Kindergarten**: 17 (14-17-20)
- **Primary (grades 1-3)**: 21 (18-21-24)
- **Intermediate (grades 4-6)**: 25 (22-25-28)

Superintendent Forsten shared national class size data.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>High</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.H.</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Concord</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
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Superintendent Forsten discussed current class sizes in Concord. With a total enrollment of 1801 elementary students, class sizes range from 15-25, with an average of 19.8. At the middle school, with 961 students, sizes range from 17-37, with an average of 23. The high school’s current enrollment is 1,596, with class sizes ranging from 11-47, with an average of 21.35.

Superintendent Forsten described research on class size from the Center for Public Education, which reviewed 19 studies connecting class size to academic achievement. The research suggested that smaller class sizes in the primary grades boost academic achievement, especially for minority and low-income students. Class sizes of no more than 18 were recommended in those grade levels. It was also noted that teacher quality is a critical factor in the success or failure of class size reductions. In addition, professional development for teachers and a rigorous curriculum were found to enhance the effect of reduced class size on academic achievement. The most influential evidence that smaller classes lead to improved achievement come from Tennessee’s Project STAR. Superintendent Forsten will provide the research she referenced in the presentation to the Committee members.
Several members noted that smaller class sizes seem to be a good consideration when students who experience behavior challenges and others who benefit from differentiation of instruction are considered. Having three or four students with high behavioral needs in a class of 19 is different from a class without significant behavioral needs.

Jim Richards asked about the fourth/fifth grade multi-age classes at Beaver Meadow, an initiative that was sparked by the possibility of higher class sizes in a traditional grade configuration. Superintendent Forsten indicated that the Principal and several parents have spoken positively about this so far. Mr. Richards noted that he also had positive feedback from one of the teachers involved. Ms. Poinier suggested that the processes used at BMS this year be documented and shared with other schools where there might be a need for this approach.

Clint Cogswell noted that he has been asked why taxes have gone up when enrollment has decreased. He indicated that he always responds with information that the Board has held class sizes steady despite the decline.

There was no public comment. Ms. Wicks noted that she received an email from a parent about the school calendar, who would like to see the school year begin after Labor Day. Ms. Wicks said that the Board is happy to receive emailed comments from the public.

The next meeting of the Instructional Committee will be on December 5. At that time, members will hear about proposed high school courses for 2019-2020, and will receive an update regarding new courses implemented during this school year. Other topics for upcoming Committee meetings include competency grading at CHS, and Project KEY for kindergarten.

The Committee voted 4-0 to adjourn (motioned by Mr. Cogswell, seconded by Ms. Wicks).

The meeting was adjourned at 6:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Palley, Recorder