



Mill Falls Charter School creates life-long learners by providing an intellectually rich and challenging experience delivered through the Montessori tradition. In a safe and peaceful setting, dedicated educators foster students' individuality, creativity and critical-thinking skills to fully prepare them for future scholastic, civic and personal success.

## **MFCS Meeting Minutes for February 17, 2016**

Mill Falls Charter School, 100 William Loeb Drive, Manchester, NH

**1. A: Call to Order Welcome Public:** 6:33pm

**B: Roll Call:** *Present:* Tellez, Depasse, Johnson, Champagne, Kacavas, Martin, Wrubleski, Levin.

*Absent:* Callahan.

**2. Announcement:**

Martin announced that there is a new nominee for the Board, and that the Trustees will go in to closed session to discuss the nomination. **Motion:** Depasse motioned to go into closed session, Kacavas seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous. **Motion:** Following the closed session, Depasse motioned to end the closed session; Kacavas seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous.

**Results of the Closed Meeting:** The Board unanimously approved the nomination of Melissa Brough to the MFCS Board of Trustees.

**3. Public Comment:** No public comment

**4. Approval of Minutes** from January 2016 meeting

**Motion:** Tellez moved to approve the minutes; Champagne seconded.

**Vote:** Unanimous approval.

**5: Montessori Moment:**

MFCS Lead Upper Elementary Teacher, Ms. Lauren (Everglades Classroom), presented an introductory lesson using the *Decimal Checkerboard with Multiplication*. The lesson was delivered via video.

**6. School Update**

a. Educational Program Director (Wrubleski; please also see attached report)

Wrubleski highlighted the recent Upper Elementary Dance as a wonderful school event. She also mentioned the meeting she and Levin had last week at the *Girls at Work* offices in Manchester. *Girls at Work* is a non profit that empowers girls and women to build all kinds of items, usually with wood, from scratch. That visit was in part to explore working with *Girls at Work* team to develop an afterschool program for our Mill Falls students, and also, potentially, for a staff collaboration in the fall if funds were available for such a program. Wrubleski also explained that the Upper EI teachers, Wrubleski and Levin have been working with our 6th graders to develop programming focusing on Service Learning. The first project the students have taken on is our upcoming All-School Game Night. MFCS Parent Lauren Doukas has begun meeting and working with the team of 6<sup>th</sup> graders in the planning of the event. The students will also be lead volunteers on Game Night. This is a great opportunity for the 6<sup>th</sup> graders to give back to the school. Their next Service Learning project will be done outside of the School setting and will most likely involve another non profit/service organization.

Wrubleski also spent some time discussing the Manchester School District's plan to no longer send their staff and contracted special educators to Mill Falls to provide special education services to our Manchester students with IEPs. Levin and Wrubleski initially attended a meeting called by the District in December to introduce this idea of shifting the service model. They learned on Monday that the District would cease to deliver academic services as of March 1, and cease provision of related services on March 31<sup>st</sup>. Obviously, this is a very short timeline. Wrubleski and Levin have worked since Monday afternoon with our lawyer and other resources to be sure that all of our communications and considerations are carefully thought through. Wrubleski shared that she and Levin will be sending home a letter to families and also communicating with

the District to establish an overall contract for this new model. Wrubleski explained that going forward, we will hire special educator(s) to provide academic services; the related services (OT, PT, etc) will be provided by hired consultants, just as the district does now. The Board took a few minutes to discuss how services are provided now and the advantages to this new model as well as the details that need to be sorted out before Wrubleski and Levin are able to go forward with the hire and with direct service provision.

**b. Executive Director** (Levin; please also see attached report)

Levin highlighted the role that the Intent to Return forms plays in our planning for our Lottery and for next year's student body. She noted that we have a near perfect return rate among our current K-4<sup>th</sup> graders, and await word from the handful of Upper Elementary families who have applied elsewhere for next year.

She also shared that she and Wrubleski are beginning to plan the graduation program for our fifteen 6<sup>th</sup> graders who will be completing our program. She also reminded folks of the upcoming Montessori Morning Tours (March 10<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>) as well as the upcoming Grandparents & Special Friends Day (March 16<sup>th</sup>) and the annual Charter School Association's Annual Best Practices Conference (March 18<sup>th</sup>). She encouraged Board members to attend these gatherings. Tellez asked for some clarification regarding the financial health of the MFCS Child Care Program. Levin explained the number of participants has not been consistent, and as has been discussed throughout the year and that the number of families utilizing the program is far below the expected and budgeted numbers. While the program is still bringing in funds, it will not meet the budgeted numbers. Levin pointed out that other programs, including our afterschool programming (music, drama, STEM, etc.) which were not budgeted for along with some other programs and efforts will help to make up some of the difference. Levin also mentioned that she and Wrubleski are solidifying plans for a very strong 12-3pm Kinder program next year which will be taught by our kindergarten teacher. To help draw attention to this, Levin is strongly encouraging all families currently applying to our Lottery with kinder applicants to consider enrolling their children in the KinderCare 12-3pm (afterschool) Program. The goal of that program is to provide a rich afterschool program which will feature extra time in our setting, access to art, music, drama and movement and other elements which will help to prepare the kinder students for their elementary years.

**7. Officer/Foundation/Committee/Working Group & Related Q+A**

**a. Finance Committee** – Budget-to-Actual

Depasse discussed that we are doing well over all. The Finance Committee has been looking at the new budget for next year, evaluating potential new programs for next year and the following years, some of which may require a phased in approach, depending on our final proposed budget.

**b. Governance Committee** (Martin)

Martin reviewed the make up of all Committees and reminded Trustees that everyone is expected to serve actively on at least one Committee. The discussed make up of the Committees are as follows: Governance: Champagne, Tellez, Depasse, Johnson and Martin; Charter Committee: Levin, Wrubleski, Brough, Tellez; Finance Committee: Greg, Michelle, Levin, Martin; Facility: Kacavas, Martin, Levin, along with community members, Will Kanteres, Deb Depasse.

**c. Foundation Update** (Levin)

Levin noted that the current Foundation holdings = \$106,642. She also shared that the Foundation is currently working to solidify the Annual Breakfast date and keynote speaker. The date is likely early to mid-May, the expected venue is the same as last year – the Puritan Conference Center. Kacavas will also look into SERESC venue for a possible site for the Breakfast or other events.

The Board discussed how to deepen its connection with the Foundation. Trustees rested on the suggestion that an officer of the Foundation be asked to attend and present at the School Board meetings 1-2 times per year. Martin will reach out to the current Foundation Chair and will work with him to figure out a schedule that works. Levin closed with another request that Trustees help to populate the Montessori Morning Tours which function as our main tool for sharing our work – resulting in partnerships, funders and ongoing community links. Again the dates are Thursday, march 10<sup>th</sup> and Friday, march 25<sup>th</sup>, both 9-10am.

**d. Legislative/Charter Association Update**

Levin briefly shared the update on HB-1563 that would have provided full per-pupil funding for kindergarten students (currently the state only pays ½ of the pupil aid for kinder students). Initial testimony from the DOE related to the bill, noted that the price tag to provide full day/full student funding for all NH kinder public school students was just \$3million dollars. However, just before the bill was heard on the floor of the House (after passing out of the Education Committee with Committee approval) the DOE announced a calculation error and in fact the program could cost as much as \$13million. The bill died on the floor of the House as even the Chair of the Education Committee spoke against supporting the bill. The vote was split down party lines, with just a few Republicans supporting the bill. Levin shared she and Rep. Mary Heath wrote an Op Ed which has been submitted to the Union Leader.

Levin also discussed HB1272 the bill that was written to simply update the language regarding busing of charter school students. Current Charter Law says charters may be deemed responsible for any additional costs related to busing district students to the charter school(s) located in its district. This bill would strike that and insure that costs are on the district where the schools are located, not the charters. But there is now an amendment with language that could be misinterpreted by districts including as it relates to Special Education transportation. Some in the charter world feel the bill needs clearer language and should be further studied. Members of the charter community are discussing this bill to better understand its full impact as it is now written.

## 8. Program

### **a: Increasing our Student Computer Resources: Winter 2016 Chromebook Purchase** (Levin/Wrubleski)

Wrubleski shared that we've been working with a Dell representative who also works with Kate Callahan at her school in Portsmouth. We have weighed our options, looked at different machines and related bids. With Depasse's assistance, we have decided that the Dell machines are what will best serve our needs. Levin shared that the Finance Committee has reviewed the costs and that the Committee supports the purchase of the Dells. Levin explained that beyond the budget line for Computers & Equipment, we will need an additional \$4853, but would like to ask for \$5000 additional dollars toward this purchase. The total purchase for 25 Chromebook, the Google device license fee which will allow us to centrally control the devices and the cart which will house and charge them, plus a small shipping charge, will be \$8178.75.

**Motion:** Depasse moved that we support the \$8179 purchase for Chromebooks and approve an additional \$5000 to the Computer & Equipment budget line toward Chromebook and cart purchase. Johnson seconded

**Vote:** Unanimous approval.

### **a: Bylaws Update** (Martin, 15 min)

Martin reminded the Board that the ad hoc committee (Martin, Johnson, Levin) shared their first draft in November. Since then, the Trustees have had the opportunity to review the Google doc Bylaw file and he plans to move this to a vote after a brief discussion of the remaining questions which have been raised in the Google doc version of the Draft Bylaws. The Board reviewed the remaining questions related to: Defining the role of ED/EPD as members of the board; Filling a vacancy mid term and the related term time; Annual meeting; Foundation-School Board liaison and cross membership. Following that conversation, the Board prepared to vote on the revised bylaws.

**Motion:** Johnson moved to approve the accepted changes based on consensus and extended discussion of the bylaw revision; Depasse seconded.

**Vote:** Unanimous approval

**9: Next Meeting Date:** March 23, 2016 6:30pm

**10. Public Comment** – none.

**11. Adjournment:** Tellez motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:05; Kacavas seconded.



## **Educational Program Director Board Report, February 17, 2016**

**Upper Elementary Dance:** About 2 weeks ago, we held our first Upper Elementary Dance of the year. Six students volunteered their time to plan and organize the theme, decorations and food. Stephen Thorne DJ'ed the event with all the bells and whistles and the students munched on pizza and hot chocolate served to them by a host of parent volunteers. This is possibly the best turn out for an event we've had to date with about 50 students in attendance. We will most certainly be hosting a final dance in honor of our sixth graders graduating in the spring.

**100th Day of School:** On February 9th and 10th, we finally reached our 100<sup>th</sup> Days of school for both the elementary and kindergarten! Snow caused us to delay on the 9th, so the kindergarten celebrated 1 day later. To those of you outside of the school environment, this may not seem like a big deal but to the students this means that they have clearly completed more than half of the school year and its time to celebrate with all sorts of the activities around the topic of 100. Teachers arrived dressed as 100 year olds including walkers and canes. Lower elementary students worked on a variety of activities such as counting 100 objects and drawing portraits of themselves and the upper elementary played Minute To Win It games for the afternoon. On the 10th we assembled as a school to watch a slideshow created by Meryl of 100 pictures since the start of the year. Students cheered with excitement!

**Lindner Dental:** The first week in February, Lindner Dental came to present on the topic of dental hygiene. Students watched a video and discussed healthy foods to eat for good dental hygiene. Everyone left with a handy informational packet and pencil.

**Community Programing:** This past Friday, Meryl and I met with Elaine Hamel from the Girls at Work program to discuss the possibility of running an afterschool program for our students this spring. There also seemed to be a great opportunity for staff bonding in the fall, however we would need to determine funding for this type of event to occur.

**6th grade Programing:** The 6th grade team (including the students) has decided to participate in service learning through supporting Game Night. Lauren Doukas has graciously offered to volunteer and work with the all of the 6th graders on this event. They will be working on advertising, manning the game tables and supporting whatever additional jobs are needed to make the event successful. Following this event, students will then choose an organization to support in the community.

**Assessments:** Midyear assessments are nearly complete. Progress reports will be sent out March 11th via Montessori Compass and parent teacher conferences are scheduled for March 17<sup>th</sup>.



**Executive Director's Report  
For the February 17, 2016  
MFCS School Board Meeting  
Submitted by Meryl Levin**

### **Required Reporting**

Earlier this month we completed the required Feb 1<sup>st</sup> filing of the Charter Per Pupil Aid Form, which resulted in our third Equitable Aid payment for the year and reflected our full, 168 student enrollment.

### **Facility**

Earlier this week, we received an order of chairs – some folding metal some wooden 'guest' chairs. These were purchased at WB Mason's warehouse sale, and provide us with some much-needed additional seating for our library and common area spaces, which are used constantly.

Small item but high impact - the installation of new paper towel dispensers in the bathrooms. At the end of the first day with these new dispensers, we were already seeing a drop in paper usage and related mess. The new dispensers easily allow our kiddos to use just one piece of paper and gave us all the chance to spend time thinking about the environmental impact of reducing our paper usage as a school. When you are at school, you will notice some posters the students created and hung up to keep us on track.

### **Before/Aftercare Program At a Glance:**

We have been advertising availability in our Child Care Program in our newsletter and with a direct email to parents from Susanne (who manages the Child Care Program). We have seen an increase in Drop-ins, but not much additional movement in commitment to regular enrollment.

Here's how things currently look:

Before care (7 - 8:15am) – 12 (11 full time; 1 part time); up by one since last month.

Kinder care (12 - 3:00) – 6 (4 full time; 2 part time); one went to part time since last month.

Extended Kinder (12 - 5:45) – 2 (full time); down by one from last month.

After care (3 - 5:45pm) - 16 (12 full time; 4 part time); up by 1 full time and 2 part time since last month.

### **Enrollment & Lottery**

**A: Intent to Return:** At this time of year we request that parents/guardians of all currently enrolled students complete our 'Intent to Return Form' (will your child be returning next year or not?).

This is a key element to our planning for the Lottery (so we know how many spots will be available). It also provides critical data for the planning of our Upper Elementary Program, which, last year, was our most delicate program in terms of enrollment consistency.

We ask that parents/guardians complete the form honestly – and some put notes saying they are not yet sure, which we appreciate. Often they talk with us even before the form goes home, to let us know their plans (we are moving, applying elsewhere, etc.). This way, we know to connect with these folks as spring approaches and can generally minimize our enrollment surprises in September. It also helps us welcome new families on a calm and organized way while school is in session, rather than in a mad rush as happened last summer when several Upper El families waited until late summer to tell us their children were enrolled at other schools.

With nearly all forms returned, and phone calls made to those who have not yet returned, we have a good sense of the current overall pictures. We have near 100% returning in 5 grades, and thus far, just a handful of departures in the other two grades (next year's 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>). That said, those who have applied to other schools will be finding out soon and we know some

folks who applied elsewhere but have also told us they are coming back. We hope to hear from them in March so we can adjust our roster and plans accordingly.

**B: 2016 Lottery Season Update:** We are more than halfway through our 2016 Lottery Enrolment Period and have held 3 of our 4 Lottery Information Sessions. Sessions have been attended by 25-35 adults and many of their kiddos. The final Info Session is scheduled for Saturday, March 5<sup>th</sup> at 10am.

The Lottery Enrollment Application will be available on line until March 9<sup>th</sup> at 5pm (and is available on paper when requested, and must be postmarked by the 9<sup>th</sup>). Our Lottery Day is scheduled for March 15<sup>th</sup>.

As per our Lottery literature and message, we are encouraging families with kinder students (5 years old by Sept 30, 2016) and families with children who will be in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade next year to enroll. The 2016 Lottery is open to NH students at every grade level we serve, K-6. This year we have seen more siblings of currently enrolled students than ever entered in our Lottery.

**C: Lottery Enrollment as of 2/11/16:**

As of today, we have 146 applications. Here's the breakdown:

K=93; 1<sup>st</sup> grade=18; 2<sup>nd</sup> grade=12; 3<sup>rd</sup> grade=11; 4<sup>th</sup> grade=7; 5<sup>th</sup> grade=4; 6<sup>th</sup> grade=1.

I shared our waitlist for next year with you last month, but again for easy access: there is a total of 408 kiddos on the list which as you know is organized by grade. Here's how that list breaks down, currently (remember our wait list rolls over, so this year's k list, is next year's 1<sup>st</sup> grade list):

Next Year's 1<sup>st</sup> grade (current kinder list) = 56; Next Year's 2<sup>nd</sup> grade = 99; Next Year's 3<sup>rd</sup> grade = 101; Next Year's 4<sup>th</sup> grade = 123; Next Year's 5<sup>th</sup> grade = 17; Next Year's 6<sup>th</sup> grade = 12

**D: Graduating our First Cohort:** Laura and I have just begin to plan our first MFCS 6<sup>th</sup> grade Graduation. Modest in size and scope, we look forward to some creative ways to send off our 15 graduating 6<sup>th</sup> graders this year. Stay tuned for more details, as we hope you will be able to join in the celebration!

**Financial**

The state successfully deposited our Equitable Aid into our new Bank of NH account! So final changes to our banking will now take place and we will be closing our Citizens accounts. A reminder that our BNH account provides us with a credit card (limit \$5,000) rather than the debit card Citizens provided (in fact Citizens would not approve a credit card for us).

**Human Resources**

At a staff meeting earlier this month, we were joined by the regional Aflec representative who spoke to us about sick, hospitalization and short-term disability insurance among other plans. Assuming there is ample interest (3 or more staffers), we can establish a group (with group discounts). Other ideas for increasing benefits for Lead Teachers in particular include the consideration of making our health insurance benefit more flexible (which could be used for family leave and/or professional development/education), and allowing for banking of additional sick days. The Finance Committee will be discussing these options and bringing forth some proposals when we begin to discuss our FY17 Budget with the full Board later this winter. Should you have any thoughts/ideas relating creative, meaningful and affordable benefits for our hard working staff, please be in touch with me directly.

**MFCS Community Building & Volunteerism**

Many members of our parent community have been contributing in multiple ways this winter. A sampling of that below:

**Lottery Help:** MFCS parents help out during Lottery Season during our Information Sessions by providing home made treats, helping to set up and attend the Sessions as parent Ambassadors.

**Hospitality Committee** – Earlier this week, this group provided lunch for staff our Early Release Day. Headed up by Molly Blaisdell and supported by a mighty group of families, this Committee continues to take amazing care of our staff!

**Reading Buddies & Handwriting Without Tears** – a committed troop of parent readers and handwriting instructors have been working with our Kinder and Lower Elementary students this year helping to strengthen student skills.

**Parent-Driven Fundraising** – Lisa Zonfrillo has brought incredible energy to the preparation of this year's Raffle Calendar. She and parent Amy Green are finalizing the new design of the physical calendar, which incorporates all the prizes Lisa has collected. Together they have secured sponsorship for the printing of the 1700 + copies which will be made and distributed to our families (10 calendars each, more if needed). This is the largest Spring Parent-Run Fundraiser and Lisa's energy is sure to make this a big success. The selling month will be March and the Raffle month will be April.

Students and parents alike continue to appreciate our **Pizza Friday** program. Parent Sarah Duffley works monthly with a small group of Upper Elementary students to count the money and finalize the order. To date the program has brought in just over \$2000 (net)!

The **First Lego League** (FLL) Program Leaders, Swati Gohel and Kristin Cassidy organized a second trip to SkyZone – the world's first indoor trampoline facility which is located here in Manchester. Forty students spent the afternoon flying through the air. And again this month, the folks at SkyZone donated back a small percentage of the ticket sales, totaling just short of \$125. Additionally, this week I worked with Swati and Kristin to apply for a grant in support of the FLL Program's growth. This grant requested \$5000 toward the purchase of materials and curriculum for the afterschool FLL Program. Last spring the Program served 12 students; additional equipment would allow space for about 20 students. The grant request was submitted to the NH Charitable Foundation's Community Grant Program, after we consulted with the Foundation's staff.

**Art Displays** – Angelica Kashulines and Amy Kershaw have been hanging student art this year. The display changes from time to time, so please be sure to look around to see the current winter chalk drawings as well as the elephant project and the Mondrian project.

**Field Trip Chaperones** – Our winter/spring field trip schedule is beginning to take shape and next week parents from each of the three Lower Elementary Classrooms with chaperone as the students head to the Audubon for their winter field trip.

### **Community Connections:**

**Our upcoming Montessori Morning Tours will take place on March 10<sup>th</sup> and March 25<sup>th</sup>, both from 9-10am.** If you have any people you'd like to invite, or like for me to invite, please share their names and contact information with me. A reminder that this Tour series has been our main marketing and outreach tool, and has produced many important connections and partnership. Thanks for your help in continuing to populate these tours!

**Our 2016 Grandparents & Special Friends Day has been scheduled for March 16<sup>th</sup> (9-11am).** We will soon be announcing this to our parent community and hope that some of you will also be able to join us to help us welcome these extended family members and friends to our school.

**The annual NH Public Charter School Association's 'Best Practices Conference'** will be taking place on Friday, March 18<sup>th</sup> at Birches Academy (an arts integrated charter school in Salem). I will be presenting at 1-2 sessions. Board members are welcome to attend the Conference. I will

share the workshop schedule once it is published so you can decide if you'd like to join for all or part of the day.

# # #