



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 Board Meeting Minutes for November 16th, 2016

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

1. Call to Order 5:32, Roll Call & Welcome Public

Present: Levin, Wrubleski, DePasse, Roberge, Brough, Kacavas, Connors; by phone: Johnson.

2. Public Comment: No public comment.

3. Meeting Business

a. Approval of Minutes from October 2016 meeting

Motion: Brough motioned to approve the minutes; Connors seconded.

Vote: Unanimous.

b. Agenda Review (2 min, ONLY if necessary due to emergent issue)

4. Montessori Moment (10 min)

Wrubleski shared that the current events (election) have been felt at Mill Falls, albeit not as deeply as at other schools and setting. In an effort to remind our students of our culture of kindness and empathy, she discussed how each classroom spent time returning to our social/emotion curriculum tools rolled out at the beginning of the year aimed at building community. She also reminded the Board of the diversity of our population and how because of this the school takes seriously the need to be sure that Mill Falls is a safe environment for all in our community.

5. Governance Committee: (Levin, 5 min)

Levin discussed Naomi Butterfield and her interest in joining the Board. Butterfield has worked closely with Mill Falls over the years as our pro-bono lawyer (on contracts, HR issues, staff handbook, etc). The Governance Committee expects to nominate Butterfield at the next meeting.

6: School Update

a. Educational Program Director (Wrubleski)

Wrubleski discussed the following:

Progress Reports: The school has transitioned to a new Progress Report, which is built in and distributed via our new student information system, ALMA. Wrubleski discussed the differences between the new system and the previous reporting model used in past years. One significant change is that it is a multi-age report so for our Lower and Upper Elementary students, it shows expectations for the full three-year cycle. Families received the reports ahead of Parent-Teacher Conferences so that they were able to compile any questions or concerns to bring to their meetings. In terms of the preparation of the progress reports, teachers are given some time during the work day to work on these lengthy reports, outside of the classroom. Wrubleski added that although it is still very time consuming for the teachers to prepare these reports, and for parents to read through them, she and the staff feel it to be a far more useful format.

Special Education: Wrubleski shared that the service delivery system now in place (the reimbursement model being used by nearly all sending Districts) has been working well. The challenges faced now are due to the severity of the needs of the student population; the need level is significantly higher than in years past, particularly in the Kindergarten room. Wrubleski is often pulled in to provide additional needed support in classrooms for behavior support. Wrubleski and the team are continuing their work to get several of these students identified so that they can be provided with Special Education supports. Currently, we have paraprofessionals in each classroom. Connors discussed CEC grid, which can be used to document needs to help support future services. Wrubleski voiced interest in looking into this tool.

Teachers: Wrubleski also discussed that currently there is 3 teachers working on their certification in Montessori education. She has seasoned teachers working as mentors and level leaders. This appears to be working very well.

Living Wax Museum: Great parent turn out. Discussed how the students took the project to the next level when they shifted the focus of the student-presentation to a key moment in life of the person in history each student chose to research and represent at the Living Wax Museum.

b. Executive Director (*pls also see attached report*)

From her report Levin highlighted **free and reduced** is currently a little less than last year - it is currently at 27, though there may be a few more additions. Discussed how that information is useful to the school because we are able to provide discounts and or free participation in some of our in-house programs (pizza, after school programs, etc.) to those who qualify.

Food Pantry: Levin shared that she, Wrubleski, our Office Manager and Office Assistant, participated in a training by the Food Bank about running our new Food Pantry Program. The Food Pantry Program will roll out in December, and will make it possible for us offer food to students and their families who are food insecure.

Night of Community: Levin mentioned that there are just a few tickets are remaining (caps out at 100 guests). The event will feature a silent auction, a live auction and this year's Fund-a-Need will be aimed at raising funds to improve the outside space. Plans are to use the Fund-A-Need dollars to support outside activities and equipment. The other funds raised in the silent auction and student art auction and the ticket sales will be put into our general fundraising zone to support programming now and in the future, as needed.

Special Education: Reimbursements are going smoothly. The majority of the reimbursements are coming from Manchester (the sending district with the most Special Education students). All but one district is working with this reimbursement model. The Finance Committee has added a monthly agenda item to check in the status of reimbursements.

Unemployment Benefit Update: Since its founding, the school has not contribute to the state's unemployment fund, but rather has been self-funded. Therefore, in the event of a claim, the school would pay the state for that claim. We do currently have one claim, the School's first in it's 4+ years of operation. Levin shared that the Finance Committee has been discussing whether or not to change the status. There are complex pros and cons to both positions. The Committee will share with the Board any information gathered to help come to a decision.

7. Committee Reports

a: Facility Committee

Levin shared that there is no current update on lease agreement. Will be meeting with the Union Leader Management in the next weeks. Nothing will be approved at that meeting, but may prompt the need for a quick board meeting to review and approve the proposal.

8: Program: Funding request for an additional Classroom Assistant in the Kindergarten Room

Levin and Wrubleski spoke to the request for additional funding to pay for a Classroom Assistant 3 hours per day in the Kindergarten room. Wrubleski discussed the magnitude of the disruptions in the educational day as well as the safety of the students. Wrubleski explained that the Classroom Assistant will help with the students' socialization and in keeping children safe, and will help refocus the children as necessary. Currently, there is a Lead Teacher and an Assistant Teacher in the classroom.

Motion: Kacavas moved to approve the funding proposal; Brough seconded.

Vote: Unanimous.

8. Next Meeting Date: Wednesday, December 14th, 2016

9. Adjournment at 6:25pm

Motion: Brough motioned to adjourn; Kacavas seconded.

Vote: Unanimous.



**Executive Director's Report
For the November 16th, 2016
MFCS School Board Meeting
Submitted by Meryl Levin**

Required Reporting

This month we filed several small reports with the DOE related to our teaching staff and students. Included were our English Language Learner Roster and our report that lists those children whose families qualify for Free and Reduced. This year, the DOE has established a new report for districts and schools that do not offer lunch programs – thus allowing us to track the Free & Reduced students – data which we consult often both to know our student body broadly, but also to offer opportunities to those families struggling financially. This year we have 26 families who qualified. Last year we had 30, and while we are encouraged to see a drop in that number, this year more of our families qualify for free (rather than reduced) than did last year.

MFCS ChildCare Program

Enrollment in our Child Care Program was mostly consistent this month, though we are expecting a few small changes in the coming month. Currently: Before Care has 7 children (this will drop to 6 next month); Kinder Care (12-3pm) has 18 children Kinder Extended Day (12-5:45pm) has 5 (one may be going part time); and our After Care Program has 17, 9 of whom are part-time. We continue to have a small number of families taking advantage of our Drop In options for each program and we will be offering Drop In care during our Parent-Teacher Conferences this Thursday for a flat \$5 per child.

Enrollment

Last week we said farewell to one student who had been with us for several years – her older sibling recently enrolled at another charter school and that charter school offered a sibling spot to our student. That Lower El spot was filled immediately via our waitlist.

During a typical week we get between 10-15 calls about enrollment and our next lottery. Susanne is just beginning to get paper work organized for Lottery 2017. As always, our online (and paper) applications will be made available just after the start of the year and we will hold 4 information sessions between January and mid March. If you know anyone who is interested in enrolling in the Lottery 2017, please have them send an email to admissions@millfalls.org to get on our mailing list.

Financial

The FY16 990 Form for the Foundation was completed this month. That, along with the School's FY16 financial records, are now under review by our auditor.

The first month of Special Education reimbursement payments were paid promptly, and we look forward to continued efficiency in that area. The prep for the billing is quite time consuming, as it involves several districts, and over 25 children's individual billing. All service hours are carefully tracked and documented by our Special Education Team and we are continuing to tweak their reporting to me, to make the billing process even more efficient.

MFCS Community Building & Volunteerism

Earlier this month, Laura and I met with the new Special Education Director, **Jen Dolloff**. It was a very productive and sound meeting, which allowed us to give Jen a tour of our school, to share our approach and hear one another regarding concerns and to brainstorm about new ways of working together. While the District will continue to struggle with costs of SpEd, it is our hope that by working together we will find meaningful ways of solving problems – ways that keep the needs of the children at the fore. The new Superintendent, **Dr. Vargas**, is scheduled to visit Mill Falls on November 30. If you are able to join us for this 9am visit, please let me know directly.

Our annual **Service Day at the NH Food Bank was a great success**. Our 1st-6th graders walked over to the Food Bank in three groups and worked together to package 1,054 bags, which

comes out to about 6,324 meals. We were joined by close to 10 parent chaperones, and thanked by all for making this service day a priority.

Last week, Susanne, Laura, Allison J and I met with a manager from the Food Bank, to help launch a new program provide **food for our food insecure students**. We will soon establish a pantry and be able to 'shop' at the Food Bank to acquire food at greatly reduced cost (pennies on the pound) which we will be able to share with those students in need. We will roll out the program slowly, with a focus on lunch items, but intend to grow it over time. Special thanks to Susanne for finalizing this arrangement on behalf of our kids and families in need!

Soon after our last Board meeting, Laura and I set off to DC to participate in the first ever Montessori in the Public Sector Conference. The Conference was designed for schools like ours to learn about the Coaching Model, which is being developed by the **National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector**. It provided us with insight into the power of the Mentoring and Coaching model which Laura has already put in place (guided in part by her early work with one of the main staff people at the Center) and provided some strong ideas for growth in this area, and for partnering with other public Montessorians in our region. We look forward to sharing some of the materials and information/news that results from that Conference over the course of the year.

At the end of October, we invited friends and families to visit our **Living Wax Museum**. This is always one of our best-attended events, and it provides the opportunity for all to celebrate and take pride in the research projects and hard work of our Upper Elementary students. So glad many of you were able to join us that afternoon, as were some of our funders.

Looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our **2nd Annual Night of Community** on November 18th at SNHU. That will feature great food, live music, an extensive silent auction, a fund-a-need and the auction of some student art. Tickets may be ordered here: <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/2667814>

In mid-December, our After School Chorus group will perform a few songs at the **Governor and Executive Council Meeting** in the state house. We are looking forward to that opportunity to be part of that public meeting with our public school students.

HR

Soon after our last meeting, the Assistant in the Everglades classroom gave her notice; she left MFCS for a job in a traditional setting. We were able to quickly fill the spot with Ashley Marchand, who has been at Mill Falls since the start of the year. Ashley has worked as a 1:1 para in the Glacier Room, staffed our After Care program, and worked with our English Language Learners for the first few months of school. The outgoing Assistant, Ms. Michelle, helped get Ashley oriented before she left and the transition has been very smooth.

There are a number of high-need children in the kinder classroom. Laura and I have determined that we must get more hands on deck in that room, ASAP. At this coming Board meeting, we will ask for your approval to hire a part-time classroom assistant to our Kinder Room.

Following a very lengthy hearing, the State changed its determination regarding M. Lawton's unemployment claim. We have not yet received a bill for the claim, but in that we are reimbursable payers (we don't pay into the State's unemployment fund), we will be required to cover our share of his claim. We, along with Founders and Polaris, are named on the claim. Our payments will come out of our unemployment budget line item.

Facility

We are in the process of finalizing a meeting time with the UL Leadership to finalize the **lease agreement**, which the Facility Committee will then bring to the Board for final approval.

Laura and I are also beginning to plan some fun **recess activities and games** that require purchase or building. If you have any ideas or leads, please speak with me directly. Thank you!!