



*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.*

*Education of even a very small child...  
does not aim at preparing him for school, but for life.*

-Dr. Maria Montessori

## **MFCS Board Meeting Minutes for November 18, 2015**

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

### **1. Call to Order: 6:32pm**

Roll Call: Champagne, Depasse, Johnson, Kacavas, Martin, Roberge, Levin, Wrubleski, Tellez (by phone).  
Absent: Callahan.

### **2. Officer Update**

Martin Welcomed the new Trustees – Kacavas and Depasse – who were voted on to the Board last month. He then shared the new slate of officers: Callahan remains as Chair (currently on family leave), Martin voted Vice Chair (acting as chair in Callahan's absence); Roberge voted as Treasurer.

### **3. Public Comment:** no public present.

### **4. Approval of Minutes from October 2015 meeting**

**Motion:** Johnson moved to approve the minutes; Kacavas seconded.

**VOTE: Unanimous approval.**

### **5: Montessori Moment:** Importance of Presentation in Montessori.

Wrubleski shared the content and meaning of last Friday's all-school meeting during which 2 groups of students presented; she showed photographs of their process and presentations. Two Lower Elementary students from the Glacier Room began by presenting a completed puzzle map, sharing information on how they worked and taking questions from the assembled students. The second graders beamed with pride as they showed their work to 175 people! Completing a map work involves several steps and can take several weeks to complete. Wrubleski reminded the Board that our students create maps at each program level, starting in K, and the maps get progressively more complex and detailed as the students get older. The second group of presenters was from the Denali Room where students have been working on sign language with their Assistant Teacher who is in a American Sign Language certificate program. Wrubleski shared how powerful it was to see the children who have learned letters, colors, and animals share what they know and teach some simple signs to the full school at the meeting. The presenters shared their skills by answering questions posed by the teacher, then they taught the whole school some signs for manners (please, thank you, etc). In both cases, Wrubleski pointed out, the tasks of presentation shows the degree of mastery our students have achieved and is an integral part to the students' journey in establishing a deep grasp of the content, as well as building self confidence in their ability to share what they have learned.

### **6. School Update**

**Educational Program Director** (Wrubleski) *(Please also see attached report)*

Wrubleski reviewed that we now have **two new staff members** – Ms. Colleen, our Math Interventionist and Ms. Tana, our Reading Coach. Wrubleski is already seeing the positive impact of Tana's work and how it is also taking some pressure off the Lower El teachers so they can now teach other curricular areas while Tana takes reading groups each morning. Colleen is working with our struggling math students and is a great asset to the team. Both are experiencing a smooth transition.

**Afterschool programming** – This month has seen a winding down of some of our fall programs - Girls on the Run had their race over the weekend, and First Lego League (FLL) participants, which is a very intensive

program, will have their competition on Sunday. All three of the FLL three teams are working at full speed to prepare for this. This month we started a STEM program, which is being taught by Lower Elementary Lead Teacher, Susan Rowe, and another teacher from outside the MFCS Faculty. Both women have trained in teaching STEM projects and the kids are loving it. We hope to run the program again later in the year. Our music teacher, Mr. John, is running both a chorus and ukulele lessons after school. Skiing is coming up. Wrubleski said she hopes to run a drama program as well as Lego Your Mind, among other programs in the coming months.

**Access 2.0** – This is the ELL annual assessment for English language learners. Students have to test in and then test out of ELL support. The state just announced that the test is now available electronically, but we can still offer it on paper. We will do so this year as we work to get the tech requirements in good order for next year.

**Smarter Balanced Results** – MFCS results were sent home on Monday. The package sent to parents included an individual student report as well as a guide to read the tests results, and a few other items to help parents as they review the results of this new form of assessment. We have gone over this with our teachers so they can talk clearly about it at the upcoming parent-teacher conferences. Wrubleski noted that we look at the results programmatically to show the teaching faculty the strengths and needs among their students. Kacavas, who was on staff last year when the tests were administered, added that some of the challenge was simply learning how to take the test. Champagne added that from what her daughter shared, that MFCS kids seemed to understand what was being asked of them, and the Montessori approach helped prepare them for the format. Kacavas noted that Montessori kids have an advantage in terms of learning ‘the how’, but even they didn’t always recognize what the questions were asking. Wrubleski concluded by saying it was a good learning experience for the school as a whole.

#### **Acting School Manager (Levin)**

*Pls also see enclosed report*

Levin touched on the slight growth in the Child Care Program as well as our full enrollment. She then talked specifically about the upcoming Night of Community this Friday. She also shared some of the volunteer opportunities that parents have been a part of this fall, from the wonderful handwriting instruction program to the more recent beautification project in our multi-purpose room – all parent powered. Finally, she highlighted the partnership program that MFCS will be doing with the Bank of NH – teaching banking skills to our upper elementary students which will begin in January.

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

#### **a. Search Committee:** Update on search for new ED (Tellez)

Tellez shared that the Committee has met and is in the process of interviewing individual applicants. She noted that the committee is made up of: Tellez, Champagne, Johnson, Wrubleski, a community member, a parent, and a Foundation representative. She noted that Johnson drafted a calendar related to the search process which will include the Board in December and a forum in January to engage families/community members. The Board will render the final decision. Tellez asked about the Board’s goal in terms of the start date? Martin responded – as soon as practical. No date has been set yet. Champagne suggested the beginning of the year. Martin noted he’s like to go through the Board interviews set for December and figure out a start date after at that point.

#### **b. Finance Committee** - Budget to Actual & Audit Update (Roberge)

Roberge noted that she and Levin have been working on a new format for the budget-to-actual and shared the current version of the re-worked reporting style. She encouraged comment and feedback, along with review of the numbers, reiterating that the goal is to more easily engage Trustees in the regular review of the financial picture.

### **8. Program:**

#### **a: Amendment to the Fiscal Policies & Procedures for Operation**

Levin noted that the Finance Committee brought this forward with the small adjustment to the recently updated Fiscal Policies & Procedures for Operation simply to add in the Purchasing and Bidding section as noted in the draft they received for review.

**Motion:** Roberge moved to approve the policy with this new addition; Champagne seconded.

**VOTE: Unanimous approval.**

**b: Bylaw Revisions** (Bylaws Working Group, 30 minutes)

After a brief discussion of the first few pages of the revised document, the Board decided to table the discussion until the next meeting. In the meantime, Trustees are asked to review the Word document which will be shared in Google Docs and add their comments.

**c: Board Interview dates for ED Search**

At this point, Johnson further mapped out the plan going forward for the ED Search. She shared plans for the Town Hall meeting, which she expects to organize for mid-January. This event will provide an opportunity for the final candidates to present themselves to the assembled audience, and to respond to questions fielded by the Board via email and or other live feeds. The Board will ask the candidates questions in a debate-like format. People in attendance will meet and greet the candidates in this way and be asked to share feedback and comments with the Board. She stressed this will be a very transparent format. The Board is planning this public meeting of the candidates for January 20<sup>th</sup>, and expects the Board Interview of the candidates will take place on December 16<sup>th</sup> (9-12:30) with a backup date of Dec 17<sup>th</sup> (11-1).

**9: Next Meeting Date: December 16, 2015 6:30pm**

**10: Tellez moved to go into closed session** to give a more detailed update of the search process; Champagne seconded. **VOTE:** unanimous approval. Levin excused herself for the remainder of the meeting.

The following items were discussed in the closed session:

- a. Tellez updated the BOT on the schedule for completing first interviews.
- b. One community member has not been able to attend recent interviews. Martin to try and reach out to that member, but the search committee will proceed with the current group and no new members will be added.
- c. Johnson and Tellez discussed dates for final interviews, board interviews and the "town hall" format, with the search process concluding in the month of February.
- d. Johnson offered suggestions on how to conduct the Town Hall meeting and will discuss with the search committee and inform the BOT.

**Motion:** Roberge motioned to exit the closed session, seconded by Johnson.

**VOTE: Unanimous approval.**

**11. Adjournment:**

**Motion:** Johnson moved to adjourn; Kacavas seconded.

**VOTE: Unanimous approval.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:35pm.



## **Educational Program Director Board Report November 18, 2015**

**New Staff Members:** Please join us in welcoming two new staff members: Colleen Lacroix, our math interventionist and Tana Gills our reading coach. Colleen will be providing support to students in grades 1-6 in the area of math. Tana will be working with students in grades 1-3 to provide additional support to the classroom teachers in guided reading.

**Afterschool Programming:** It is the final countdown for two of the afterschool programs held this fall. GOTR had their culminating 5K on Sunday, November 15th and the FIRST Lego program will compete next weekend in their own final competition. In addition, we have an arts and crafts program being run by Shannon Helie and Kristin Lang as well as a return of Ukulele lessons with Mr. John. New programs this November include a STEM program run by Susan Rowe and Kathie Babine and Chorus run by Mr. John as well.

**ACCESS 2.0:** Every January, all English Language Learners are required to participate in a standardized assessment intended to identify whether the students qualify for English language support in the classroom. The state of New Hampshire is rolling out a new electronic version of this test and Kristin Lang (our ELL teacher) and I attended the first training offered for this assessment. The electronic version of this assessment has been proposed as an option, as opposed to taking the paper version and is not a requirement at this time. As a school we are leaning towards using the paper version for this winter and switching to the electronic version next year.

**Smarter Balanced Results:** Smarter Balanced test results have been released by the state and will be sent home to MFCS parents the week of 11/16. Included in the home packet will be the results of the tests, a guide to understanding the results, a letter from the Commissioner of Education, Virginia Barry, and key topics for understanding the context of the assessment within the state.

**Living Wax Museum and Amazing Authors:** October 29th and 30th, we held our annual Living Wax Museum and Amazing Author events. The Upper El students spent one month researching an important figure in history and on the 29th dressed as that person and presented their research to family and friends. On the 30th, the Lower Elementary dressed as a character from their favorite books and presented a small research piece to their peers. Everyone wrapped up these events with a small parade for the Kindergarteners midday and the rest of the school just before dismissal. Everyone was so excited to show off their hard work and did so with pride!



**Acting School Manager Report  
For the November 18, 2015  
MFCS School Board Meeting  
Submitted by Meryl Levin**

### **Required Reporting**

Several small required reports have been filed over the last few weeks, as per reporting deadlines. These include:

- Our English Language Learner Roster
- Free & Reduced Reporting - Susanne did a fantastic job connected with families and generating the highest response rate we've ever had. We have filed on behalf of 27 students whose families qualify. Should we get any new students, or circumstances for any families change, we are able to add them to the roster.
- Student Immunizations Report - a required survey of all MFCS students' inoculation records that is filed with the Dept. of Health & Human Resources.

Additionally, I wrote the 2014/15 Annual Report and filed it with the DOE. The 2014/15 Report was filed as a narrative in response to four areas of questioning put forth to charter schools annually by the DOE. It is expected that the 2015/16 Annual Report will be folded in to the new 'dashboard' the DOE is developing. [Note: The Annual Report is usually due in August, but this year the DOE set October 30<sup>th</sup>, as their dashboard project was not completed by their expected deadline].

### **Facility**

This week marked the start of a new cleaning team at Mill Falls - R&W Cleaning will now clean our space daily, replacing the FIT cleaners. FIT has worked with us for 3 years, but has just closed down their cleaning service. We are already feeling cleaner now that vacuuming and other tasks are occurring daily.

The photocopier purchase approved by the Board last month has been put to good use, including helping our teaching staff kick off our E-Homework program. The new machine has simple scan and emailing capability. We aim to continue to modify our E-homework program, and we are looking into ways to create active PDF's of some of materials that are included in the emailed packets.

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

The Before/Kinder/AfterCare Program continues to grow slightly:

*Before Care:* Nov = 12 children (Oct = 11 children)

*Kinder (short day):* Nov = 8 children (Oct = 8 children)

*After Care:* Nov = 18 children (Oct = 17 children) 3 of whom are part time; 2 are kinders

Several families have taken advantage of the Drop-In option on regular days (when there is space) and on early release days. We will be providing childcare during the 8 hours of Parent-Teacher Conferences, free of charge UNLESS the children are in our care for more than an hour.

### **Enrollment**

As required, we reported our enrollment numbers to the DOE on Nov 1, and received the related 2<sup>nd</sup> quarterly payment of Equitable Aid soon after. We continue to be at 168 students, but, as per our in-school enrollment procedure, we are also reaching out to those families with children at the top of each grade's wait list to confirm they are still interested and let them know how close they are, should a spot become available.

## **Financial**

I have been working with the Finance Committee on continued monitoring and work toward completion of the audit process.

## **MFCS Community Building & Volunteerism**

### **First Annual Night of Community**

It has been a pleasure working with Rachel Marziano, the lead parent organizer, on this month's event. There have been a few other parents who have assisted Rachel, by acquiring some auction items, securing corporate sponsorship and helping with ticket sales. The SNHU students have done a great job of helping us execute our ideas for an evening designed to celebrate the diversity in our MFCS Community. MFCS kiddos have created art that will be auctioned off at the event. Ticket sales were priced extremely reasonably (\$25 for 1; \$35 per couple) and childcare is being offered for a flat rate of \$5 per child. The event sold out last week, and we are hopeful that it will be a great evening for all and a great opportunity for community building. There were two families who purchased tickets for Staff who wanted to attend. All funds raised from the silent and live auctions, ticket sales and childcare will come to us as fundraised dollars. When we began the event planning this fall we knew we would not be able to reach the fundraising goal set last year (because of the venue's size limitation and short planning period), but we embraced the importance of getting an annual event like this 'on the calendar'. Rachel and others have already begun talking about ideas for next year!

### **Volunteers**

Many families have been lending their time, energy and expertise this fall in a variety of ways. The Teacher Support Committee has been preparing materials for teachers; the Hospitality Committee is again planning to provide a beautiful luncheon for staff on our November Early Release Day, which is also our Parent-Teacher Conferences. About 6 parents are working with our Kinder and Lower El students delivering the Handwriting Without Tears instruction. Displays of student artwork have been installed by parents. One parent is working with Laura W. and some students monthly to tally our Pizza Friday orders and she is also organizing the Breathe NH Fun Packet Fundraiser. Another parent has organized the SCRIPs gift card program for the third year running. Parents/guardians of students in K, LE and UE are getting ready to contribute food and time to the seasonal holiday celebrations coming up (Fall Harvest Lunch, etc). Parents have been volunteering after school as well. Some have worked tirelessly leading our First Lego League students this fall, meeting nearly daily to work on their projects. Our parent-led ski program will soon kick off as well. We are so appreciative to all!

The Parent Group Coordinators have shared with Laura and I that attendance has been very low at the two Parent Group meetings held so far this year, but we are all bolstered by the excellent responses we receive when there have been volunteer opportunities presented to parents. We are all considering new ways to bring parents/guardians together so families can get to know one another and help tighten the community bonds.

### **Fundraising / Foundation Update**

#### **Holdings:**

The Foundation currently has \$88,472.80 in the bank – this includes the most recent deposit of ticket sales for the upcoming Night of Community event.

#### **Monthly Giving**

The Monthly Giving Program currently includes 33 parents as well as 1 current Trustee, 1 former board members and 1 founder. We have 8 new monthly donors who joined since the school year began which increased our monthly intake by \$280 /mos. While a few families suspended or have gaps in their donations – we expect to get approximately \$1470/mos - about \$13K over the school year.

#### **Individual Donations**

One large donation for \$1000 came in late last month from a MFCS family, and we've

received a few more recent smaller donations from community 'friends of Mill Falls'.

In December the Foundation will be sending out the 2015 Annual Appeal to past community donors timed to the year-end. Last year, the Annual Appeal to parents brought in very little, and given our Fall Fundraiser, it is unlikely that we will run an annual appeal to our MFCS Families this year.

### **Board Giving**

A reminder to Trustees, that we do ask all School Board Trustees to make a donation to the MFCS Foundation annually in support of our School as we aim to have 100% giving among Trustees. The Foundation has the same policy among its Board members.

### **Community Connections:**

Since the start of the school year, we have been welcoming small groups of visitors to school. Most recently, 22 students from SNHU's School of Education came for a Morning Tour.

As always, if you have made a connection with anyone you feel should be on our guest list, please share his/her name and contact information so I can arrange a visit, and do let me know if you'd like to be present for that tour.

Bank of NH's Ellen Soucy and her colleague came to speak to Laura and I this week to plan their curricular banking program for our Upper Elementary students this winter, as part of our growing partnership with the Bank. The Bank has a student program, which we will work together to tweak slightly. We expect this will culminate with a field trip to the bank at the end of the series of banking lessons.

Last week I spoke at Leadership NH's Education Day. As I have for the last 4 years, I shared the experience of founding and running NH's first public Montessori school with the Leadership Class.

###