



*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 December 16, 2015 Meeting**

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

### **1. Call to Order, Roll Call & Welcome Public**

Present: Depasse, Johnson, Kacavas, Martin, Wrubleski, Levin, Tellez

Absent: Callahan, Roberge, Champagne

### **2. Public Comment**

No public present.

### **3. Meeting Business**

a. Approval of Minutes from November 2015 meeting

**Motion:** Kacavas motion; Depasse seconded.

**Vote:** Unanimous approval.

### **4. Montessori Moment: *Learning 1-10 & Montessori Color Coding* (presented by Kristin Lang, Lead Kinder Teacher)**

Kristin recorded a video of herself showing 'The Bead Stair' this is a lesson taught to our Kindergarten students. This material helps the children become familiar with the color-coding number system, which carries through all Montessori materials into the Upper Elementary Program. Kristin also demonstrated the follow up work that is done with stamps and colored pencils. This follow up work is great for strengthening fine motor skills as well – gripping the pencil, careful drawing. Wrubleski also briefly discussed the Montessori material that comes next in the progression – Teens Board.

### **5. School Update**

**Educational Program Director (Wrubleski)**

*Please see attached report.*

Wrubleski discussed our growing technology needs, which are increasing in small part related to the testing, but in large part because we are discovering more apps which are interactive and exciting for our students. One app she mentioned by example is a handwriting app, that is a fast response program and a great way to direct/correct the students quickly and positively. Also, we have been able to integrate technology for our students with special needs. Wrubleski is hoping to get Chromebooks this year to increase our technology resources. Depasse mentioned he is very willing to help out with our networking needs and is in conversation with his company regarding our increasing tech needs. He and Levin will follow up on this topic.

**Acting School Manager (Levin)**

*Please see attached report.*

Levin highlighted the success of the First Annual Night of Community; the Commission studying the delivery of Special Education in Charter Schools; the slight drop in the Child Care Program enrollment; the new bookkeeper. There was also a brief conversation about parent community building. Levin pointed out that our most successful events beyond the Night of Community have been academic in nature. It was agreed that we will continue to provide exciting and engaging academic-based programming on the school side to bring folks together.

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

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

Tellez reported that Search Committee completed its work and recommended two candidates to the Board.

These two candidates will be interviewed by the Board tomorrow. There was a brief discussion of the plan for

interview day. The out of town candidate will be taken for lunch and given a tour by Laura Wrubleski and perhaps others.

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

Levin briefly reviewed the budget-to-actual and asked for questions. Kacavas asked about the Facility plans going forward as we move toward the completion of our first lease. Martin said the Facility Committee will reconvene in January and hoped Kacavas would serve on that committee. Depasse mentioned that his wife, Debbie, just completed a location search and fit up for pre-school and might like to be involved as a non-trustee on that Committee. In the past, the Committee included Levin, Martin and Kanteres.

**c. Legislative/Charter Association Update (Levin)**

Levin reviewed the Current Bills related to NH Charter Schools:

**1. Funding for charter office position** - This bill has received strong support from both D's and R's. The initial version of the bill (it's being changed) would have required that the position be made by Governor & Council. This is not something that has a lot of support as many feel that it would further polarize the charter issue.

**2. HB1456** – This bill would have the Governor & Council appointing all Trustees at charter schools. Unlikely that this bill has any significant support at this time.

**3. HB536 – Changes to SPED funding** - This bill was requested by the DOE & would codify the DOE's current practice of sending state money for special education (\$1,865 per pupil) directly to the district and not the charter school. This bill passed House Education 19-0 and a report was filed by Rep. Ladd however the bill did not go to the floor of the House in the 2015 session.

**4. HB1120 – Teacher qualifications** - This bill would require that all charter school teachers (100% up from 50%) be certified. This is being highly publicized by the teachers' union in the state.

**5. HB 1351 - Laws governing charter schools** - This bill would require that charter schools comply will all of the laws that other public schools do. IE, we would probably be required to follow ED 300 instead of ED 318. Obviously this would bankrupt the schools due to the costs of compliance.

**7. Program**

**a: Follow Up to Meeting with the District of Manchester Related to Special Education Services (Levin/Wrubleski)**

Levin updated the Board regarding the meeting in early December with the Manchester School District. Levin, Wrubleski and our pro-bono lawyer attended the meeting which was held at the district with the Head of SpEd our long-time SpEd contact at the District, as well as the District's lawyer. The basic plan is that the District will transfer responsibility of hiring SpEd service providers from the District to the individual charter schools located in Manchester. Wrubleski explained the benefits of having more control over the hires of those providing SpEd services to our students, but both agreed there are a number of business areas to consider carefully. Levin met earlier this month with the Finance Committee to discuss the issues. Levin and Wrubleski have invited the other 3 Manchester-based charter schools to a meeting to discuss this new plan. Levin and Wrubleski will continue to work through the economics related to this new plan, and identify what is needed beyond the service hours noted in the IEPs (planning time, meeting time, HR-related items, etc.). Wrubleski explained that the services that we would hire for are academic, not the supporting services (like OT, PT). For that support, we will continue to work with the consultants already contracted with the District.

**b: By-law Revisions (Bylaws Working Group, 40 minutes)**

Martin suggested the By-Law Ad Hoc Committee schedule a meeting to go through the changes/suggestions by the Trustees and generate a final draft to be brought before the Board in either January or February.

**8: Next Meeting Date:** January 20, 2016 6:30pm (Martin)

**9. Public Comment** – No public present.

**10. Adjournment**

**Motion:** Depasse motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:50pm; Kacavas second.

**Vote:** Unanimous approval.



**Acting School Manager Report  
For the December 16, 2015  
MFCS School Board Meeting  
Submitted by Meryl Levin**

### **Required Reporting**

With our Independent Annual Audit of FY15 now complete, we have filed it with the DOE along with the DOE's required financial reporting for FY15.

### **Facility**

We continue to regularly practice our emergency safety procedures and recently conducted a 'reverse' fire drill – practicing exiting the rear of the building, rather than the front. The Safety Committee has met and reviewed our current plan and members expect to have a meeting with the City's School Safety Officer in the New Year.

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

Enrollment in the Before/Kindergarten/AfterCare Program has dropped slightly this month. On the upside, several families have taken advantage of the Drop-In option on regular days (when there is space) and on early release days. Parents appreciated the coverage provided during Parent-Teacher Conferences in late November, which was provided free of charge unless the children are in our care for more than an hour.

### **Enrollment**

We continue to be at full capacity with 168 students. This week we learned that one Lower El student will not be returning after the holiday break – the commute for this two-parent working family is proving too difficult. We have already filled that open spot with a sibling of a currently enrolled student. Our procedure of being in communication with those at the top of each grade's wait list has greatly facilitated our ability to quickly fill these openings.

### **Financial**

In late November, we hired a new Bookkeeper, Allison DeCesere. In our first two weeks together, we have been extremely productive, improving upon some of the recording systems already in place.

As of this writing, we are working with our Bank of New Hampshire (BNH) banker, Ellen Soucy, to move the School's banking to BNH. We will continue to keep the Citizens accounts open at least through the end of the calendar year to enable a smooth transition.

### **MFCS Community Building & Volunteerism**

**The First Annual Night of Community** was held on November 20<sup>th</sup>. Hosted by SNHU's Hospitality School students, this sold-out event was an enormous success both in terms of community building and fundraising goals. The SNHU event planning students wowed our guests with food from around the world (prepared by SNHU culinary students), and created a beautiful and thoughtfully designed setting for our event. Childcare was provided on-site for a minimal fee. Guests were welcomed by a small group of our students who recited a poem of gratitude both in voice and via sign language, led by Ms. Shannon joined by Ms. Laura W. The event's fundraising elements consisted of: ticket sales; child care fees; 9 pieces of our students' art work (which guests bid on during a live auction); the many silent auction items gathered by MFCS Parent and event lead, Rachel Marziano, and her small but mighty parent team; and the live 'Fund-A-Need' with a focus on raising funds for increasing our technology resources. The event cost under two hundred dollars, and grossed nearly \$7500!

### **Parent Volunteerism**

Our parents have been enormously helpful this fall. I wanted to take a moment to point out

some of the highlights. Please note, folks lend a hand nearly daily, so these are just some of the programs and activities...

**Hospitality Committee** – This group, and those they organize takes seriously the goal of spoiling our staff! They are incredibly thoughtful and generous and regularly provide catered luncheons for our staff on Early Release Days and went above and beyond at this Fall's Conference Day providing both lunch and dinner!

**Parent-Driven Fundraising** – Beyond the fantastic work by Rachel Marziano on the Night of Community, MFCS parents Veronika Hombs and Sarah Duffley have each taken the lead on two 'give and get' projects. Veronika has again spearheaded our Scrips gift card program and Sarah has overseen both the Breathe NH coupon book as well as serving as the parent organizer for our Pizza Friday programs. The energetic Calendar Raffle Team has already begun work on the 2016 Calendar project, which will take place this spring.

**Library** – a huge thank you is due to Hind Basher who has worked very hard over the last several weeks to put our lending library in good order. This week she re-arranged the shelving and has some other ideas for the future of that space.

**Afterschool Clubs** – The First Lego League was tirelessly led by MFCS Parents Swati Gohel, Kristin Cassidy and Veronika Hombs. Our Afterschool Ski Program will soon kick off and the parent organizer for that, Craig Johnson.

**Handwriting Without Tears** – About 6 parents continue to work weekly with our Kinder and Lower El students delivering the Handwriting Without Tears instruction. Our teachers are seeing improvement and so appreciate the parents' commitment to the program.

### **Community Connections:**

Earlier this week, I presented to the Commission Studying Special Education Service Delivery in NH's Public Charter Schools. I organized my colleagues at Strong Foundations and Gate City and formalized a presentation that would offer the Commission a view into the mission, daily schedule, and structure of NH charter schools as well as particulars about how Special Education services are delivered in our schools. We told our Special Ed 'story' via the invention of two hypothetical students, each with a different set of disabilities and a different educational story. The goal was to share the information in such a way that the Commission members would keep the children in their minds, as they consider the process and related issues. We spoke for over an hour and included in our presentation a list of costs that the charter schools cover above and beyond what the sending districts cover.

### **Foundation Update**

#### **Holdings:**

The Foundation currently has \$100,079 in the bank.

#### **Monthly Giving**

The Monthly Giving Program is as reported last month, with 36 current participants.

#### **Community Annual Appeal**

The Community Annual Appeal is already underway and has thus far raised \$5180. The mailing itself features art created by two of our Upper Elementary students, and sends a message celebrating our accomplishments, and our needs related to program growth with an emphasis on technology.

#### **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 with the aim of maintaining 100% giving among Trustees. The Foundation has the same policy among its Board members.



## **Educational Program Director Board Report December 16, 2015**

**Fall Progress Reports & Parent Teacher Conferences:** Our first set of progress reports for the year were delivered via Montessori Compass on November 20th. The progress report data is collected over a period of about 3 weeks and analyzed for progress per child. This process is essential to the validity of our instruction and ensuring that each child is progressing at an expected rate. All of this information was shared at our parent teacher conferences held on November 24th. We have discussed as a staff the idea of changing the format in which we structure our conferences. An eight-hour stint of conferences appears to be a bit strenuous for the staff and many suggested spreading the options of meeting out over a series of days.

**Annual Parent Night Out!:** Every year we offer the opportunity for parents to bring their children in for a movie night and leave them with their capable teachers. Five teachers generously donated their time to supervise the 40 children that came to watch the movie "Home" on Friday, December 4th. As a whole the school fundraised about \$200 and that couldn't have been done with our fabulous staff! Thank you!!

**Additional Technology:** We have begun the search for additional technology for use in classrooms, to support special needs and use during standardized assessment time periods. The initial idea is to get a quote on Google Chromebooks as a means to diversify the students skill base and to give different options for those students that do not utilize apple products easily.

**New Progress Report Format:** Over the past year or so, we have gathered feedback from parents and staff members regarding our current progress reports. In processing this feedback, we've found the current progress reports are a bit overwhelming and difficult to use for parents and challenging for teachers to input. With this in mind, as a staff we started to create a template for future use but we do not anticipate implementing this new report until the June progress report at the earliest.

**Hiring:** We have interviewed for Joelle Gaona's upper elementary assistant position and are in the process of checking references for our final candidate. This person will begin in the Everglades room January 4th.