



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 January 20, 2016 @ 6:30pm

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

1. Call to Order, Roll Call & Welcome Public

Roberge, Depasse, Johnson, Champagne, Martin, Levin, Wrubleski, Tellez (on the phone)

Absent: Callahan, Kacavas

2. Announcements/Updates (5 min)

Martin announced that Meryl Levin is now our Executive Director.

3. Public Comment

No public comment.

4. Meeting Business

a. Approval of Minutes from December 2015 meeting

Motion: Johnson moved to accept the minutes, after adding Tellez to the 'in attendance' list; Roberge seconded.

Vote: Unanimous approval.

5. Montessori Moment: *Geometric Equivalence* (Mike Lawton, Upper El Lead Teacher, delivered via video)

Lawton shared the Montessori approach to teaching lessons about various geometric shapes and their relationships using the Montessori materials called Metal Insets.

6. School Update

a: Educational Program Director (Wrubleski)

Please see attached report.

Wrubleski shared that as a school we've been working hard to bring in community members to school programming. This year some existing relationships have deepened. The Bank of NH is doing a banking program as shared in her report. That program explores saving and spending and making good choices about both. It will last for four weeks, with an expected outing to the bank and is being taught by members of the Manchester branch staff. In addition, Wrubleski is planning a new project with the Derryfield School students, this time it involves a theater program. Both of these are Upper Elementary programs.

Wrubleski then highlighted some of the preparation related to the 6th grade End of Year Programming. Mill Falls admin and staff have been discussing graduation plans, an overnight trip, and a few other ideas to celebrate the accomplishments of our first graduating cohort. She noted that we also need to consider their transition out of Mill Falls to their next educational setting. In this first year of graduating 6th graders, she is working to develop relationships with the schools the kids will be going to – there are several options including district, private and other charters. Staff will work with the kids to make that transition as smooth as possible. Champagne suggested that maybe our 6th graders going to Manchester middle schools could be part of the step up program that the District holds at Hillside and elsewhere. Wrubleski will explore that option, and others, as we learn where the students are heading.

Martin asked about the Chromebook purchase which Wrubleski mentioned at the last meeting. Wrubleski and Levin shared that they have gathered a few quotes from sellers and expect that the computers & the cart and related fees may come to about \$15,000 or so (bid collections has taken longer than expected to get from sellers). With that now in hand, Levin will try to find grant support for this purchase, as it is not in the

FY16 Operating Budget. Levin did ask the Board if they have any leads for potential support. Depasse offered to review the bids and both he and Martin offered to help in other ways as needed.

b: Executive Director (Levin)

Please see attached report.

Levin updated the Lottery Enrollment thus far (up to 99 applicants in all grades but 6th). She discussed the upcoming 2016 Calendar Raffle being led again this year by parent Lisa Zonfrillo. The majority of time was spent discussing HB 1563 – the bill currently being considered by the NH Legislature regarding funding for full day kindergarten in NH public schools. Levin shared her experience at the previous week’s hearing on the bill where she was among more than 15 people who testified in favor of the bill. Levin asked the Board to consider some possible ways to reach out into the larger community to make them aware of the bill and its importance related not just to Mill Falls students, but to our state overall.

Depasse asked for an update regarding our discussions with the Manchester School District and their plan for us to hire the service providers for our Manchester students with IEPs receiving special education services. Levin and Wrubleski shared that they have drawn up questions related to Mill Falls’ needs and have met with other charter schools on the subject. The District will be hosting a meeting of the Manchester charter schools and service providers in early February. Wrubleski and Levin have posted the opening for Special Education Teacher(s) but await more information from the District at this point.

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

a. Finance Committee (Roberge)

Roberge reviewed the December Budget to Actual and the ongoing modifications of the report itself.

b. Foundation Update (Levin, 5 min)

(see attached report)

Levin shared the update that earlier this week Quentin Keefe was named the new Board Chair of the Foundation. Quentin has served on the Foundation Board for many years and has been a sponsor of several of the breakfasts and extremely generous in his support and leadership.

c. Legislative/Charter Association Update (Levin)

Levin shared some updates regarding current legislation related to charter schools. These include: A bill to fund a staff position for the charter office and charter leaders are eager to have a point person in the DOE, though the general DOE staff is very helpful as we navigate reporting and DOE systems; A bill that proposes that charter schools be responsible to all rules related to district public schools (ED-300) which would cut into the flexibility that is the basis of the charter school model. It is not believed that this bill will progress. There is also a bill related to the certification of teachers at charter schools. Current law requires 50% of charter school teachers be certified; at Mill Falls a far greater percentage of our teachers are state certified. However, like many charter programs, we do want to be able to tap into teaching talent (private school teachers or others who may have specific training in Montessori or other). Levin shared that a discussion about this among charter leaders led to thinking about how quality supervision and evaluation impacts teaching quality, and that teachers are in most cases are encouraged to seek state certification as part of their professional development.

Tellez asked about the Charter Association. Levin shared that beginning in December, the Association began running monthly meetings that are theme/issue oriented. The first was focused on school communication tools – Levin and the Head of ASD presented. In January the Association explored charter budget making lead by the Head of Surrey Village. Additionally, Levin shared that the Association is currently building a new job description for its Executive Director, and looking to fill that position.

8. Program

a: 504 Policy & Related Parent Resources: A Required School Document (Levin/Wrubleski)

The Board discussed the need for this policy and its content, during which time Johnson suggested the language for an additional step in case there is a grievance with the 504/ADA Coordinator.

Motion: Johnson moved to accept the Policy with the addition of a step 1b if the grievance is with the 504/ADA Coordinator's decision; Champagne seconded.

Vote: Unanimous.

a: Bylaws Update (Martin)

Martin shared that the By Laws Ad Hoc Committee will set up a conference call to review suggestions that have been made to the Google doc and finalize the edit. Any Trustee interested is welcome to join in that call. That final document will be shared with Trustees before it is brought for a vote.

9: Next Meeting Date: February 17, 2016 6:30pm (Martin)

10. Public Comment

None.

11. Adjournment, 7:33 pm.

Motion: Johnson motioned to adjourn, Champagne seconded.

Vote: Unanimous.



Educational Program Director Board Report January 20, 2016

Classroom Observation Day: For the first time this year, we implemented our peer classroom observation day. We find that given the opportunity to leave their personal classroom domains and observe in their peer's classrooms is immensely informative for both the hosting teacher and the observer. Within this format, teachers are given 30-45 minutes to sit and observe the environment, the students and if wanted, look over materials that are used to teach concepts. In the month of February, assistants will have the same opportunity.

Afterschool Programing: This month we have 3 new afterschool programs starting, one of which is brand new. STEM is returning for a second session and has become quite popular with the students. The McIntyre Ski program is running for the fourth year in a row and we continue to have significant numbers of students participating! This program has proven to be a great opportunity for students to learn the basics of skiing but in a small controlled environment. And finally our newest program is drama! This class is being taught by two of our staff members, Allison Jacques and Jessica Scenna. All of the students just got their scripts and/or responsibilities in the crew and they will be putting on a performance in 4 weeks time!

Community Programing: It has been a goal to partner programmatically with community members for some time and we have finally been able to host our first in house program this winter. We are incredibly fortunate to have two staff members from the Bank of New Hampshire, Ellen Soucy and Mary Beth White, facilitating a money sense program with our upper elementary students. Once a week for the entire month of January, students meet with these bankers to discuss the importance of saving and spending money wisely. They have even generously given small gifts of calculators to each of the students to use at home!

6th grade Programing: The culminating six months of our 6th grade group of students is going to be jam-packed! The upper el team and I met to discuss a service learning project that will begin for them in the month of February and continue through March as well an overnight trip in May or June and finally their graduation ceremony to occur sometime within the final days of the school year. In addition to all of these events we are also mindful of the transitions that are happening to all of the local middle school programs in the area and the need to forge relationships with these schools in order to ease these transitions to a new setting.

Hiring: Please join us in welcoming Colleen Costa, our newest employee in the Everglades classroom. She is currently the classroom assistant, but came to us from Gossler Park Elementary in Manchester, NH and is a NH state certified teacher. The transition has been incredibly smooth and we are more than excited to welcome her to our staff!



**Executive Director's Report
For the January 20, 2015
MFCS School Board Meeting
Submitted by Meryl Levin**

Required Reporting

Earlier this month we completed the required DOE-25 for the first quarter of FY16, and will soon file the second quarter report.

Facility

A portion of our professional development day this month was spent going over some of our safety plans and procedures with full staff. We continue to refine our existing procedures and practice them with the children.

Before/Aftercare Program At a Glance:

Before care – 11 (10 full time; 1 part time)
Kinder care (until 3:00) – 6 (5 full time; 1 part time)
Extended Kinder (until 5:45) – 3 (full time)
After care - 13 (10 full time; 3 part time)

Enrollment & Lottery

Current Enrollment: We continue to be at full capacity with 168 students. At the start of this calendar year, we welcomed 3 new students: 2 kinders and a 1st grader. All these spots were filled before the holiday break and no days were lost to enrollment vacancy.

2016 Lottery Season has Begun! As you've seen in the newsletter, and elsewhere, we kicked off our 2016 Lottery Enrollment Period on January 4th. The application is available on line and by paper when requested. We had our first 2016 Lottery Information Session and welcomed 30 parents and their children. It was a wonderfully diverse group of people which has become the norm for our Info Sessions, but unusual is that more than ½ of the group had experience with Montessori. I had great assistance from our school community who sent in snacks and helped as parent ambassadors. Here is the schedule for our Info Sessions for the Lottery Season. We strongly encourage anyone who is applying to attend one of these:

- **Wednesday, Feb 3, 12pm**
- **Thursday, Feb 11, 6pm**
- **Saturday, March 5, 10am.**

The Lottery Enrollment Period ends on March 9th. Our Lottery Day is scheduled for March 15th.

Thank you for helping us spread the word. **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 5th and 6th grade next year to enroll.** That said, this Lottery is open to NH students at every grade level we serve, K-6. In our Lottery, each family gets a Family Lottery Number and EACH number is called on Lottery Day. As the numbers are called, we assign each Lottery participant either to an available spot, or to a spot on the wait list. The wait list generated by this year's Lottery will create our Kinder wait list for next year. In all other grades, the wait list will be put below the previous year's wait lists which are by grade.

Remember we do also have the sibling preference, so the sibling of an enrolled student who has put an application in to our lottery will be assigned a spot if open, or put on the sibling wait list which supersedes the general wait list as per charter law. We have gotten a number of applications from siblings thus far, mostly for our kinder program next fall.

This week we sent out the 'Intent to Enroll' forms to our current families and once we have that back at the end of this month, we will have more information regarding any other open spots.

That said, I remind us that in the past, some people have waited to tell us their plans for the following year which makes it challenging to welcome new families in a timely fashion and include them in our step up days, kinder orientation and assessment, etc. So, if you know of anyone who is NOT planning to return for any reason, please encourage them to let us know as soon as possible!

Lottery Enrollment as of 1/15/16: As of today, we have 87 applications. Here's the breakdown: K=59; 1st grade=11; 2nd grade=6; 3rd grade 7; 4th grade=3; 5th grade=1; 6th grade=0.

Our waitlist for next year is hearty in most grades; 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 first grade list):

Next Year's 1st grade (current kinder list) = 56

Next Year's 2nd grade = 99

Next Year's 3rd grade = 101

Next Year's 4th grade = 123

Next Year's 5th grade = 17

Next Year's 6th grade = 12

Financial

Our bookkeeper, Allison Decesere and I are continuing to modify our financial reporting with input from the Finance Committee.

As of this writing, I am awaiting final confirmation from the state that we are all set for them to wire transfer our Equitable Aid and other state payments into the Bank of New Hampshire (BNH). We will continue to keep the Citizens accounts open a bit longer to enable a smooth transition.

Human Resources

I have been working to identify some new and creative ideas for benefits for our staff. I have reached out to the regional Aflec representative who will be coming to speak with staff later this month, and will be looking into some other areas. I have also been speaking with other NH charter schools for creative ideas that work well and jive with our limited funding stream. Should you have any thoughts on the matter, please be in touch with me directly.

MFCS Community Building & Volunteerism

During the lead up to the holiday season our parents were extremely active here at school. We had some wonderful special project days related to the holidays and had some parents come in to help beautify our environment.

Parent Volunteerism Ongoing

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

Parent-Driven Fundraising – Lisa Zonfrillo has been hard at work since we returned from break pulling together the 30 prizes she will need to populate the 2016 Raffle Calendar. She is determined to beat the funds raised last year - \$8000 – and has set the bar at \$10,000. All members of our school community will be asked to help make this Calendar Raffle – the largest Spring Parent-Run Fundraiser a big success. More details to follow in late February. The selling month will be March and the Raffle month will be April.

Our **Pizza Friday** continues with a shout out to Sarah Duffley who works with our students monthly to count the funds collected.

The **First Lego League** team celebrated the end of their season by organizing an afternoon at SkyZone – the world's first indoor trampoline facility. Nearly 40 students spent

the afternoon flying through the air. The folks at SkyZone donated back a small percentage of the ticket sales, totaling just short of \$150.

Library – Hind Basher is continuing her work in 2016 pouring through the many donated books and organizing our collection.

Afterschool Clubs – This month our Ski Club hit the mountain at McIntyre. Special thanks to Craig Johnson who spear heads that effort. We have about 20 kiddos including our kinder students participating. As of this writing, Craig is still looking for a few more parents to join him as program chaperones.

Upper Elementary Dance – Laura has been working with the 2016 Student Dance Committee organizing their plans for the dance on the 22nd. She will have 5 parent-chaperones not including our parent-dj!

Community Connections:

Earlier this week I was asked by Senator Feltes to testify before the House Education Committee about the importance of **funding Full-Day Kindergarten** for all NH students relating to a bill he is sponsoring - **HB 1563**. I was one of 16 people who spoke in favor of the bill. I will keep our school community posted about this important bill.

I continue to serve on the **Commission Studying Special Education Service Delivery in NH's Public Charter Schools**, which this month heard from the Chair of the State Board of Education. That Commission is now beginning to focus on the report we are required to generate by next November. Also serving on the Board is one of our parents who serves as the parent of a charter school student with SpEd needs, and she is also a district superintendent here in NH. She is one of about 3-4 parents who serve on the Commission. I have learned a lot about the minute details of SpEd and Equitable Aid funding history and now have a clearer sense of the politics that surround this issue. **A reminder that Charter School Leaders feel that the current law is working well in most cases and that new legislation is needed at this time.**

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