



*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.*

*All our handling of the child will bear fruit, not only at the moment,  
but in the adult they are destined to become.*

-Dr. Maria Montessori

## **MFCS Meeting Minutes for March 23, 6:30pm**

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

### **1. Call to Order: 6:40pm**

### **2. Roll Call.**

Present: Depasse, Johnson, Brough, Martin, Levin, Wrubleski

Absent: Callahan, Kacavas, Tellez, Champagne

### **3: Public Comment\***

Chris Taylor: Could Early Release days be on Fridays instead of Wed next year? It's hard to get time off mid-week.

### **4. Meeting Business**

#### **Approval of Minutes from February 2016 meeting**

**Motion:** Depasse motioned to accept: Johnson seconded.

**Vote:** Unanimous approval.

### **5: Montessori Moment: Infinity Street & Golden Mat**

MFCS Lower Elementary Lead Teacher, Shannon Helie, shared a video in which she demonstrated *Infinity Street* which is a place-value work. This material teaches the children how to read and write numbers. The work looks like houses and each place value is a house (of different sizes), hence the name - *Infinity Street*. Houses shows units, tens and hundreds and a mailbox with the name of that place value. Shannon then showed the *Golden Mat* work, which provides students with a means of practicing multiplication through the use of *Montessori Bead Bars*.

### **6. School Update**

#### **a. Educational Program Director (Wrubleski, please also see attached)**

Wrubleski highlighted the Spring Scholastic Book Fair, which was held earlier this month – the same week as Grandparents & Special Friends Day and Parent-Teacher Conferences. The Fair – our largest yet – brought in a great deal of Scholastic Book Money which Laura will use to purchase books and other Scholastic products. She noted that Smarter Balanced Assessments will start early next month and run for about a week. Greg Depasse has been working with Dave Sarvai (both MFCS dads) to strengthen our WiFi system. Children have been practicing with the new Chromebooks (which arrived earlier this month), as well as the iPads and Wrubleski noted how great it is to have variety of tools, especially since the testing program works differently on the Chromebooks. Her goal is to have the testing completed in just one week; last year it was 9 days. Wrubleski noted that she and Levin went to a meeting at the Manchester School District earlier this month organized by Nash Reddy the Director of Student Services. There were service provider vendors there who presented to the Manchester charter school leaders who attended. The District also presented their planned fee-reimbursement schedule which they will use for reimbursing schools which hire or contract with providers directly to meet the IEP needs of their students. However, the District was not clear about which students or schools would be able to have services provided at the charter schools vs. which students might be bused for services to District schools. Wrubleski has reached out to set up a planning meeting for May, no

word back yet from the District. Wrubleski is currently involved with Extended School Year (ESY) meetings. ESY is usually used as summer school to keep kids from regressing in their skills over the summer, but because of missed services by the District this year, the District plans to make up some of the missed services over the summer. These ESY meetings are held by the District and include our team and the students' parents. Wrubleski noted that the District is also discussing the option of busing students to their services at these meetings with parents. Wrubleski shared the concern she has, that is shared by parents, that this would take away from their general education time, which impacts their learning time. The Board discussed their serious dislike and concern around a plan for busing children. Those concerns ranged from time lost on meeting curriculum requirements, to busing stigma and noted this isolated approach to providing services. Wrubleski noted how hard it will be to have communication with the providers should the children be bused. Wrubleski will be back in touch with parents now that all the ESY meetings are complete.

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

Levin highlighted the enrollment in the Lottery and the enrollment picture now coming into view with the Lottery now complete. Currently, all students K-3 (next year's 1-4<sup>th</sup> graders) have said they plan to return. We know some in the Upper Elementary Program have applied elsewhere though also completed their 'Intent to Continue' forms saying they'd be back at MFCS next year. We hope to hear from those parents over the next weeks, as other schools let them know their enrollment plans. Wrubleski noted we need to lose 9 in the Upper Elementary before we need to fill a spot there, given the fact that we have 15 graduating 6<sup>th</sup> graders, and more than the usual 24 4<sup>th</sup> graders as a result of late departures last year by those who would have been in 6<sup>th</sup> grade this year, but chose to go elsewhere. Levin also discussed the plan for our Kinder AfterCare Program next year in which our Kinder Lead and Assistant Teachers will staff the program. The Kinder AfterCare will be much more robust than it has been this year. That has been discussed at length during our Lottery Info Sessions, and we will begin to sign people up now that the Kinder class has been selected via the Lottery.

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

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

The Board briefly reviewed the Budget to Actual which reflected the steady flow of income and expenses, with no unexpected shifts.

**b. Legislative/Charter Association Update**

Levin shared the wording of the amended bill, noting that it removed the references to existing RSA's 189:6 and 189:8 and replaced them with somewhat vague wording regarding 'regular bus schedules and routes'. This bill, HB1272 was intended to clarify the legal language related to busing of charter school students. The bill also has an amended analysis by the DOE attached to it to clarify the additional wording.

**c. Foundation Update – Leadership Breakfast**

Levin shared the details of the upcoming 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Leadership Breakfast: May 3, 2016. Keynote Speaker, Paul LeBlanc – President of SNHU; table captains from the School Board and the Foundation Board already hard at work building the guest list. Sponsorship at \$9500 so far; waiting on a few others. This is the largest single-day event each year and raises critical funds for our School. Levin asked for all to help invite guests they feel can and will make a donation at the morning event. She concluded by sharing the Foundation's current holdings: \$107,000.

**8. Program**

**a: English Language Learner Compliance Plan** (Levin/Wrubleski)

The Board had a brief discussion regarding the ELL Compliance Plan and then moved to vote.

**Motion:** McCeil motioned to accept the draft as presented; Depasse seconded it.

**Vote:** Unanimous approval.

**b: School Calendar** (Levin, 5 min)

The Board discussed the proposed 2016/17 School Year Calendar. Broadly speaking, this Calendar follows the Manchester District's Calendar with just a few differences. Wrubleski and Levin explained the thinking behind the change in Parent-Teacher Conferences - a response to staff requests. Next year the Fall Conferences will be a full day (no school); the Spring Conferences will be an Early Release Day. They also mentioned the attendance trend, which strongly suggests that moving Early Release Days to Friday would mean that we would have very low student attendance.

**Motion:** Brough motioned to accept calendar as presented: Johnson seconded.

**Vote:** Unanimous approval.

**c: FY17 Draft Budget Discussion:** A first look at the budget draft

The Board reviewed the budget, which was projected and draft copies were distributed to Trustees as well. Levin walked the group through the highlighted areas, noting that those areas are the lines that show some change from the current FY16 budget. Martin and Depasse noted that the budget has been carefully reviewed by the Finance Committee and there are just a few last pieces of information which will make final the propose budget. Martin asked that any questions or suggestions be shared with the Finance Committee so that those may be taken under consideration over the next few weeks, with a plan of approving the budget at the April meeting. Levin agreed to make time to meet with those not in attendance at this meeting to discuss the draft budget.

**9: Next Meeting Date:** April 20, 2016 6:30pm

**10. Adjournment**

**Motion:** Depasse moved to adjourn the meeting; Johnson seconded.

**Vote:** Unanimous approval to adjourn the meeting at 8:34pm.



**Educational Program Director  
Board Report  
March 23, 2016**

**Charter School Conference Day:** On March 18th, charter schools within the state gathered at Birches Academy in Salem, NH to attend a conference day filled with a variety of topics based on anything from instructional practices to educational law. These conferences are a nice opportunity to touch base with our peers and to gain some knowledge simultaneously.

**Parent Conferences:** Our 2nd conferences of the year are complete. Parents and teachers met for about 20 minutes per child to discuss the academic and social/emotional progress since our November conferences.

**Book Fair:** Last week, we hosted the second book fair of the year. Once again, we have topped our all time sales and sold roughly \$3000 worth of merchandise. The school will benefit by receiving 50% of that value in scholastic book dollars. Recently we redeemed \$4000 in book dollars and received 7 boxes of books to be used in the classrooms and the library.

**Smarter Balanced:** Students have begun practicing on both iPads and our NEW Google Chromebooks. We have primarily been focusing on how to use the technology efficiently with the testing app as well demonstrating test-taking strategies. We will begin testing April 4th and anticipate being finished by April 11th.

**Manchester Special Education Services:** On Friday, March 11th, we attended a round table session hosted by the Manchester School District's Director of Student Services, Nash Reddy. At this meeting, service-providing vendors were available to discuss their services and possibility of supporting the needs of students. Manchester School District's Director of Student Services remains undecided as to the steps the District intends to take with regard to providing our special education services. Nash Reddy did indicate a continued possibility that our students could be bussed to neighboring schools to receive their services. As follow up, I did reach out to schedule a planning meeting in May that hopefully will solidify plans for next year. In addition, as discussed previously, any missed special education services are being made up in the MSD offered summer programming.

**Staff Reviews:** I am in the process of reviewing staff performance and delivering formal documentation to the staff. Our process is based loosely on the Danielson Model and considers planning & preparation, instruction, environment and professional responsibilities. Observations and discussions throughout the year are taken into account for this formal review.

**Afterschool Programming:** Many new programs have started up this month! Lego Your Mind has returned for our 1-3 grade students. Students use engineering principles and Legos to learn about scientific/engineering principles. Also returning is our Arts and Crafts with Shannon and Kristin for upper elementary students. A new program for this spring is Introduction to Sign Language with Celia Botto, assistant in the Denali room. And lastly, we will be having a Musical review organized and facilitated by two Derryfield seniors! These seniors along with Allison Jacques, our office assistant, will be meeting twice a week with a final performance in May.



**Executive Director's Report  
For the March 23, 2016  
MFCS School Board Meeting  
Submitted by Meryl Levin**

### **Required Reporting**

As spring approaches, so will follow many reporting requirements. From our 2016/17 School Calendar which the Board will review at the March meeting, to a salary survey, quarterly reporting among others. Our final Equitable Aid payment will come after school ends, and following the filing of our End of Year report on our student enrollment.

### **Facility**

MFCS Parents and tech-wonders Dave Sarvai and Greg Depasse have given us their all over the last several weeks, first re-evaluating our wi-fi signal, and then boosting it with additional access points. Both Dave and Greg were spotted with their heads above the ceiling tiles as they strung cable to help insure successful signal strength. This was all done to sync with our purchase of the 25 Chromebooks, which arrived this week, and the upcoming Smarter Balanced Assessments, which will greatly increase our wifi needs. Thank you Greg and Dave!!!!

### **Before/Aftercare Program:**

Our Before/Kinder/AfterCare program continues to generate income at close to the rate seen in previous months. As we begin to turn our attention to next year, we are focusing particularly on our KinderCare Program – the largest potential for enrollment growth. We had hoped that the full-day kinder funding bill would pass, but since it has not we, will enact our plan-b because our kinder program is simply too short of a day to meet the curricular and social/emotional needs of that age student. We will be putting increased resources into the Kinder program by having Ms. Kristin, our Kindergarten Lead Teacher, serve as the KinderCare Coordinator. She will run the program 12-3pm. This will provide for a far more structured and robust program.

During this year's Lottery Info Sessions, I spent time talking about the importance of enrolling next year's kinder students in our kinder aftercare program. With our Lottery now behind us, and the kinder class now selected, we will continue to connect with the new students' families about this important program.

### **Enrollment & Lottery**

Lottery 2016 Now Complete! Our Lottery was held earlier this week, and was officiated by Alderperson Joyce Craig. We were supported by a fantastic duo of parent volunteers – Susi Paterson and Melissa Brough. It ran smoothly and quickly. As for the lottery details... Enrollment was 216(!) our largest since our founding lottery in 2012. We had 15 siblings enroll for next year's sibling class, which meant we only had 9 open spots for the public. All of our current K-4<sup>th</sup> graders have informed us that they intend to return next year. There are a few Upper Elementary students who have told us they will not be returning and there are a few others who have let us know they are looking elsewhere, though they are continuing to hold their spots here. We are eager to hear from them over the next few weeks so we can finalize our numbers.

Of Interest, the Lottery Enrollees looked like this: The 216 applicants including a total of 17 siblings of currently enrolled students. Applicants reside in 29 different towns/cities (including Manchester) and speak 13 languages (including English).

As a reminder, the wait list generated by this year's Lottery is now positioned beneath the wait lists (organized by grade) generated from previous lotteries. Results of the 2016 Lottery can be seen on line, on our website: <http://millfalls.org/enroll/2016-lottery-results/>

## **Financial**

In this budget season, I have been working with staff and vendors to research/explore/confirm budget numbers for next year. A large portion of our meeting on Wednesday will be spent going over the draft budget. Voting on the budget is not expected until April.

## **Human Resources**

Both the budget, and a desire to increase benefits for our staff has led me to explore several benefit opportunities. I have met with 2 ALFAC reps with a team from Northwestern Mutual. I have also had discussions with other charter schools and non profits and have been running ideas by our lawyer to prepare from the introduction of some new opportunities next year. Working closely with the Finance Committee on this, we look forward to discussing some of these ideas as we review the budget this month.

## **MFCS Community Building & Volunteerism**

Many members of our parent community have been contributing in multiple ways since our last meeting. Ongoing Programs previously discussed continue to feature heavy parent involvement. Those include: Lottery - Hospitality & Ambassadors; Hospitality Committee – treating our teachers so well!; Reading Buddies & Handwriting Without – supporting our students; Pizza Friday – great fundraiser and who doesn't love some pizza! Art Displays – beautifying our space; Library Upkeep; Field Trip Chaperones.

Other highlights:

**Parent-Driven Fundraising:** Parent Lisa Zonfrillo has been the driving force behind our Calendar Raffle. She has projected a goal of \$15,000 and has been working with me to help our community reach that goal. She was here on Grandparent & Special Friend Day to woman a table and generated many sales from visitors. The selling month – March – is now almost over, and she will be organizing the proceeds and the plan for pulling the daily prizes. If you haven't purchased your calendar, hop on line and grab one (or two) – the prizes are great! <http://millfalls.org/spring-calendar-raffle/>

**Community Events:** Parent Lauren Doukas worked closely with our 6<sup>th</sup> graders to create a wonderful evening last weekend. Game Night was a resounding success and while it's not a big money maker (games are available for sale and a portion of the proceeds are donated back to MFCS), the event is a beloved family night held here at school. And this year, it even integrated a service learning component for our 6<sup>th</sup> graders as they organized with Lauren and were the evening's Game Gurus.

**The 'Best of Both Worlds 5K'** is a fun run scheduled for next fall and will be on the SNHU campus. It is an idea introduced to me by parent Amanda Gerardi. We have met with staff at SNHU to establish a location and exciting partnership ideas with the University. We have created letters, which Amanda is using now to generate sponsorship for the run, and the run's logo was created this month by one of our students. If you are interested in getting involved with this exciting project, please be in touch with me directly.

## **Community Connections:**

Our March 10<sup>th</sup> Montessori Morning Tour was populated by a diverse group of guests. From Bonnie Dunham of the Parent Information Center to the former NH Director for Substance Misuse and Behavioral Health, to members of the Neighborworks staff. We had a hearty discussion about education, health and welfare along side our usual Morning Tour subjects. **The next tour is March 25<sup>th</sup>. Please let me know if you have any people you'd like to invite!**

**Our 2016 Grandparents & Special Friends Day** was a wonderful morning here. We welcomed close to 100 guests, first offering donated breakfast treats (provided by our parents!), sharing a bit about our mission and goals, showing our 100<sup>th</sup> Day slide show and then sending them off to be with our students to learn first-hand about the Montessori classroom. Several parents along with Mindy K helped staff the BookFair, which was open all morning as well. We've gotten many

complements about the day, and about our school overall. Luckily, we got those extra chairs recently!

**Annual Leadership Breakfast:**

The details of the Breakfast have come together and we are super excited about it!!! This is the Foundation's largest one-day annual fundraising event and it raises critical funds for Mill Falls. **The Breakfast will be on May 3rd. Doors will open at 8am; the program will begin at 8:30. It will be held at the Puritan Conference Center. We have a great Keynote Speaker in Paul LeBlanc**, the President of Southern New Hampshire University. Paul is in big demand for his thoughts on education and innovation. Over the last several years as President, he has both grown the SNHU campus and grown the SNHU online program creating new industry standards in that arena. Paul is an engaging, funny, and wise presenter.

Besides Paul, there will be voices from our Mill Falls Community talking about our mission and goals and some additional large star power in smaller packages – our kids!

There is no charge for entry; the event's guest list is generated by Table Captains who reach out to those individuals in their work and personal lives who they feel will be able and willing to make a donation at the Breakfast. I've asked a few of you to be Table Captains. If you are interested in helping to invite some folks, even if it's not a whole table of 10, please talk with me and I will send you all the info you need. Thanks for your help in making the morning the success it needs to be.

We are also working on sponsorship for the Breakfast. At the moment we have secured \$9500 in sponsorship and will be hearing back from one other sponsor with the total of what his company will be able to share. If you have any ideas of potential sponsors, please be in touch with me directly. There is ample ways for us to acknowledge any and all sponsorship and we'd like to pull in a few more sponsors before the event date.

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