



*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.*

*These words reveal the child's inner needs;  
'Help me to do it alone'.*

-Dr. Maria Montessori

## **MFCS Board Minutes for December 14, 2016**

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

### **1. Call to Order 5:45pm;**

**Roll Call:** Roberge, DePasse, Kacavas, Martin, Levin, Brough. Present by Phone: Johnson, Connors

### **2. Governance Committee:**

**Trustees discussed the nomination of Naomi Butterfield.** She has served as the school's pro-bono lawyer for the last several years, and attended the November Board meeting to observe our public meeting and meet the existing Board member who did not already know her. Butterfield is leaving her current firm, and will be re-introducing Levin to a colleague so that that support can continue.

**Motion:** Kacavas moved to accept Naomi's nomination; Roberge seconded.

**Vote:** Unanimous.

### **3. Meeting Business**

#### **a. Approval of Minutes** from November 2016 meeting

**Motion:** Brough motioned to accept the Nov minutes; Kacavas seconded.

**Vote:** Unanimous.

### **4. Montessori Moment:** Presentation by Susan Rowe, Lower El Lead Teacher about Opinion Pieces

Wrubleski shared an electronic presentation created by Rowe. She explained that Common Core includes expectations that students will be working on persuasive writing as early as 1<sup>st</sup> grade. The examples shown in Rowe's presentation were written by 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> graders. Students work on 6 traits of writing all year long. Rowe, working with her students on Opinion Writing, assigned them to write pieces in response to the election. First they were asked to write a letter to the candidate who was not their first choice sharing encouraging words, then they were asked to write a second piece to the candidate who was their first choice. Successful opinion writing includes development of voice, voice, strong organization, staying on topic, smooth transitions, among other elements. This assignment also linked well to our core value of kindness-grace-courtesy. The presentation shows some examples and can be seen here: <https://spark.adobe.com/page/rEu2hl72RCjwE/>

The Board discussed the great value of the exercise, very impressed with the thoughtfulness of their writing.

### **6: School Update**

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

Beyond her report, Wrubleski highlighted: This month, our students are studying **Holiday celebrations** by looking around the world at different cultures, and engaging in age appropriate activities relative to a variety of traditions observed during this season. Wrubleski also shared news that our **First Lego League Team** (FLL) did very well. The Team was comprised of 4 students – a great size for the complex and intense commitment the program requires. Our team made it to the state competition. Last year we had a much larger group – 3 teams – which was very difficult to manage. This year the one team met often, nearly daily toward the lead up to the competition. Wrubelski briefly described the three parts of the FLL program: The Teams are required to Program robots on an actual table and have the robots complete different 'missions'. Beyond the programming, they are also given a different problem/challenge each

year and then are expected to work as a team to learn about and then present a solution for a particular problem. This year the problem related to animals. Then there is a core value aspect to FLL which matches Montessori pretty well. Teams get points in all three areas, and interestingly, a team of great programmers who can't get along, won't progress... Our team did a great job and we are really proud of them. They presented their robot and briefly reviewed the other details of this year's competition last week at our All-School Morning Meeting.

Brough asked about the **Kinder room** and the hiring of the new classroom assistant. Wrubleski shared that she was able to hire someone soon after our meeting last month, and that has certainly been helping to manage some of the needs in there. Additionally, Wrubleski added that there are several students in that room being evaluated for Special Education supports.

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

Levin highlighted a few items in her report including: Upcoming **Lottery Enrollment Season** which will begin on January 3<sup>rd</sup>; Lottery to be held in March. She asked Trustees if they had any ideas for someone not affiliated with the school to officiate on Lottery Day. She also mentioned the very positive meeting that she, DePasse, Kacavas, Wrubleski and Will Kanteres had with the new superintendent of the Manchester School District, **Dr. Vargas**. Levin shared that the **Food Bank/Food Pantry at MFCS** has now been rolled out and our first students have been sent home with food from the Pantry. She noted that the costs, while significantly less than what it would cost to buy the food from a market, still have some budget impact, as we did not plan for the pantry when preparing the FY17 budget. Connors suggested that Levin consider asking our school families to sponsor a week of the food pantry costs. Levin also mentioned that students and staff are looking forward to our after school choir's upcoming performance at the December **Governor's and Executive Council meeting** next week. And finally, Levin shared copies of the **2016 Annual Appeal** she created and mailed earlier this month. That appeal goes to members outside of our school community who have donated to us in the past; 240 were mailed.

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

**a. Finance Committee:** Review of Budget to Actual (Roberge, 5 min)

Roberge briefly reviewed the **budget to actual**, noting that there are no major changes in this month's report. Levin reviewed the usefulness of the 'variable section' of the monthly tracking – those areas of income and expense that are variable and live outside of the school's operating budget. Trustees review the operating and the variable

**Audit:** Roberge shared that the finance committee had looked over the FY16 Audit documents. Roberge and Levin have updated the Management Response and we are ready to send that back to the auditor who found only one adjustment and no findings of any kind. The Finance Committee feels ready to sign the letter and ask the Auditor to release the documents of the audit in their final form.

**Motion:** Roberge moved to allow the Finance Committee to accept the financial statements of the FY16 Audit and request that the Auditor release the documents in final form; Martin seconded

**Vote:** Unanimous.

Follow up: Levin will notify the Auditor of this discussion and vote, send the signed Management Letter and request the documents in final form. The Audit results will be posted on our Website and submitted to the DOE as required.

**b. Facility Committee** (Martin/Levin)

Martin and Levin updated the Board, sharing that there was a meeting with the UL leadership. Following the meeting, Kanteres went back with a final offer presented to the landlord's broker, related to the monthly lease rate, and is awaiting a response. It is expected that will be forthcoming, and once finalized the details will be shared with the Board for approval.

**8. Program**

**Policy: Child Restraint and Seclusion** (Levin/Wrubleski)

Wrubleski shared some background as to why this policy is coming forward at this time: Part of the behavioral plan for one of our SpEd students requires that in the case of extreme emotional distress or behavioral episodes, a crisis intervention team utilize restraint if needed for the child's safety or that of

others. Wrubleski explained that any kind of restraint would only be used once all other tactics had not impacted the situation, or if there was emergent danger to the child or staff member. She reminded that Board that of course there are many steps we take before getting to the restraint step, to try to lesson the heightened state of the child. She added that we are currently looking to have staff members trained in Crisis Prevention Training (CPI – a behavioral response method). There is no training in the area until March, so we have reached out to the Manchester District and hope to be able to participate in a training by their in-house trainer. CPI training is extremely costly (up to \$1000 per person). This particular child's sending district feels this is our responsibility to get trained in crisis response, noting that the behavior plan is not specific in terms of what type of de-escalation technique is to be used. They are not offering any training support. Trustee Connors offered to talk with trainers in her district to see if Londonderry has any trainings coming up. She also suggested that having a trainer in our environment and utilizing our philosophy would be very helpful. The training takes 2 days and requires 3-4 people be trained. Connors added it is good to train someone on staff to be a trainer going forward. Wrubleski will continue the logistical conversation with Connors and Manchester.

**Motion:** Brough motioned to approve the policy; Kacavas seconded.

**Vote:** Unanimous.

**9. Next Meeting Date:** Wednesday, January 18th, 2017 5:30pm (DePasse)

**10. Adjournment:** 6:50pm

**Motion:** Brough; Kacavas seconded.

**Vote:** Unanimous.



**Executive Director's Report  
For the December 14th, 2016  
MFCS School Board Meeting  
Submitted by Meryl Levin**

### **Required Reporting**

Earlier this week, all NH charter schools were again asked to share our projected enrollment numbers for the next Biennium (2017-18 & 2018-19) – this had been shared by us last fall. This data will be used by the Governor to plan his budget. Beyond that, this is a fairly quiet reporting month.

### **MFCS ChildCare Program**

Enrollment in our Child Care Program remained fairly consistent this month: Before Care has 7 children; Kinder Care (12-3pm) has 17 children 13 of whom are full time/4 part time (enrollment dropped by 1 since last month and we may lose another this month); Kinder Extended Day (12-5:45pm) has 5 students - 2 full time/3 part time (we expect to lose one part-time student this month); and our After Care Program has 16 (Enrollment dropped by 1 from last month) 8 of whom are part time/8 full time. We expect to lose one in January and gain part-time participant as well). 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 Early Release Day on Wednesday for a flat \$35 per child if they are not already enrolled in the After Care Program.

### **Enrollment**

Susanne and I are gearing up for our upcoming **Lottery 2017**. This will be our 6<sup>th</sup> Lottery! The application will be available on line (and hard copy for those who need it) on January 3<sup>rd</sup>. A reminder that our application is a very basic gathering of information, and is accompanied by our Parent Understanding Form, both of which must be completed to enroll in the Lottery. We will begin announcing the 4 scheduled information sessions - applicants are strongly encouraged to attend one. And our 2017 Lottery is scheduled March 20<sup>th</sup>. As usual, we will announce the kick off of our Lottery Enrollment Period broadly, to our existing community so interested siblings may apply as well as to the external community, sharing news of the Lottery with local non profits and service agencies, as well as posting fliers and on FB, etc.

If you know anyone who is interested in enrolling in the Lottery 2017, please have them send an email to [admissions@millfalls.org](mailto:admissions@millfalls.org) to get on our mailing list now.

Related to 2017/18 Enrollment, each January we send parents our **Intent to Return** form to parents of all currently enrolled students. This will be due back at the end of the month and will begin to paint the picture for us of how many openings we will have for the 2017/18 School Year.

### **Financial**

Last week we received the draft **documents from our Auditor**. The Finance Committee is reviewing those documents and finalizing the required Management Response Letter which I've worked on with Michelle. The Committee expects to share that with the Board at the December 14<sup>th</sup> meeting.

The second month of **Special Education reimbursement payments** were paid promptly, though we are awaiting two reimbursements, the delay is linked to a lag in the paperwork connected to a revised IEP. That seems to now be moving forward. Additionally, I worked with our Special Ed Team to streamline their method of reporting to me their daily service provision and I'm pleased to report that we now have a much more efficient SpEd billing prep process.

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

Late in November, the new Superintendent, **Dr. Vargas**, visited Mill Falls. Board Chair Greg DePasse and Trustee Mindy Kacavas attended, as did Foundation members Will Kanteres and

Rachel Marziano. Both Laura and I were also in attendance. We began the meeting with a math presentation by two Upper Elementary Students, and then introduced ourselves and our school's history and current profile to Dr. Vargas. From there, the conversation moved to innovation in education, and ideas for addressing the complex needs found in Manchester. I think I can speak for all of us when I say that we found the meeting to be very positive. Of note, we began many conversations with the Superintendent that we hope will be revisited in the near future, including possible collaborations. Laura provided a brief school tour to Dr. Vargas before he headed on to his next meeting.

This coming week, Susanne will begin sending home food to those children whose families qualify for free and reduced and/or are food insecure. She has sent home a letter to the families we know are struggling making them aware of **our new Food Bank Food Pantry** and have already gotten a strong response. Foods will include lunch and dinner items as well as snack foods. We are really excited about being able to provide this new resource for our students and families.

Our **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Night of Community** was held on November 18<sup>th</sup> at SNHU. Most of you were able to join us, so here I will simply share that the event brought in just over \$13,000. There are a few corporate matches that we are waiting on, and it is my hope that we will see a slight uptick in the final fundraising numbers from this event. The Fund a Need, which focused on our outdoor recess space and activities, brought in \$3450 - a start for what we will need as we go forward with ideas for the space. Please see more about this in the Facility section below.

Our **Annual Movie Night In, Parents Night Out** was a great success. Several of our staff volunteered to run the evening during which parents drop off their children, many clad in PJ's and carrying pillows and sleeping bags for a movie night held here at school. Those parents then set off for a relaxing night, sans children. The group of well over 60 children and attending staff gathered in our common space and settled in to watch *Finding Dori*. Popcorn for the event was donated by Cinemagic – special thanks to former MFCS Foundation Board member and MFCS Friend, Mark Adam and his movie theater team for their donation of an ENORMOUS bag of pop corn!

Earlier this week, I attended the **Bean Foundation's Annual Meeting**. The Bean Foundation invites members of the community as well as people from the organizations they have funded over time, to join them once a year at this gathering. This year's meeting was held at the newly renovated Police Athletic League (PAL) located in Manchester's city center. It was a great opportunity to meet up with other non profit folks providing creative programming in our city, and a chance to see the new PAL space and programming. I am hoping that some of the conversations I had with people from PAL and other organizations may generate some interesting opportunities for our students.

Later this month, our After School Chorus group will perform at the **Governor and Executive Council Meeting** in the State House. If you see him around town, please thank Executive Councilor Chris Pappas for helping to arrange this opportunity for our students.

#### **HR**

Since our last meeting, we have hired the **Kindergarten Classroom Assistant**, Kristin Ross. She is working 3 hours each day that has been a helpful addition to the Yosemite Classroom. Again, our thanks for your support last month in the funding of this new position.

We have now received the first 2 bills related to the current **unemployment claim**. As a reimbursing payer, we have sent that payment to the state each time a bill is sent. Our payments will come out of our unemployment budget line item.

This time of year our Health Insurance and Dental Insurance plans come up for renewal. I have worked with both Steve Spratt (health insurance broker working with us since 2012) and with our Delta Dental Rep to organize that information for our staff enrolled in those programs. Both

programs have an increase, albeit not an enormous spike, but still an increase. A reminder that we put \$5100 toward the health insurance costs for those qualifying full-time professional positions. Currently we have 7 enrolled staff; this deduction out of their paycheck each pay period.

### **Facility**

Late last month, Laura and I along with Will Kanteres (who serves on the Facility Committee and is representing the school in lease negotiations as he did in 2012) met with leadership at the Union Leader. Much of the discussion was around logistics related to the possible new tenant – another charter school. This week, Will is working to obtain the lease renewal agreement from the UL. Once that is in hand, it will be brought by the Facility Committee to the Board for final approval.

After the Night of Community's Fund a Need, Laura put out a call to staff to join the two of us on a staff committee to develop a plan for our **outdoor recess space and activities**. She designed the group so that each of our program levels will be represented and there will be a presence of Lead Teachers among the staff members. The Staff Plan will be brought to the Facility Committee for review and if expense levels require it, to the full Board for expense approval(s). There are a few parents who have already expressed their interest in volunteering time and resources once we are ready to move forward with a plan.

### **Foundation**

Earlier this month, I created and mailed the 2016 Annual Appeal. The mailing went out to 240 people, all of whom have supported us financially in the past, either at our Leadership Breakfasts or in response to other types of asks. I will share the mailing with you all at the meeting.

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**Educational Program Director  
Board Report  
December 14, 2016**

**Holiday Studies:** Within our setting, we strive to be universal in the study of cultures and celebrations. We begin our holiday study with Thanksgiving. The Upper Elementary program had a Thanksgiving Feast with a focus on grace, courtesy and manners. Students set the tables, made placemats and served themselves food that was prepared and provided by parents. Prior to this feast, the classes studied the significance of this holiday. The lower elementary students took a virtual field trip the Plimoth Plantation located in Plymouth, MA. Students were able to experience life as it was in the 17th century through this video guided tour. Kindergarten students made butter, applesauce and popcorn and feasted at one long table in their classroom while wearing homemade paper hats.

**Movie Night-In:** Annually, the teachers donate their time to supervise the students while watching a movie at school. This year's movie was Finding Dorie and clearly a favorite at this was the best turnout we have had yet. Our thoughts were to offer parents some affordable childcare so they have the time to finish up some last minute shopping or to just have a parent night out! We made just over \$300 and had an incredibly large garbage bag full of popcorn donated from Cinemagic Movie Theatre in Hooksett.

**Afterschool Programing:** In November, the FLL team went to their first competition to compete against local teams and were chosen to be one of the 5 teams to progress on to state championship. This past Friday, their coaches Swati Gohel and Celestia Lensky, presented the team of 4, with medals and gift certificates at our all school meeting. As a community we are so incredibly proud of their accomplishments this year and appreciate the endless hours both Swati and Celestia offered to support our students. Thank you!

**Parent Teacher Conferences:** This year we tried a new format for conferences and the feedback has been positive from both parents and teachers. Rather than offering timeslots from 12-8pm on conference day, which included a ½ day with students, we took a calendar day and offered conference slots from 8-6pm. We ensured that we offered childcare and it appears that it was easier for parents to attend with this structure. We will most likely continue this for the future.