



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, March 22nd, 2017

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

1. Call to Order 5:38pm

Roll Call: Present: DePasse, Brough, Kacavas, Connors, Levin, Wrubleski,; Absent: Butterfield, Roberge, Johnson.

2. Public Comment: No public present.

3. Meeting Business

Approval of Minutes from February 15, 2017

Motion: Brough motioned to approve the Feb 15th meeting minutes; Connors seconded.

Vote: Unanimous.

4. Montessori Moment: Kinder Language Materials presented by Kristin Lang, Kindergarten Lead Teacher

Lang demonstrated Sandpaper Letters, Rainbow Boxes and Moveable Letters. Lang discussed how the students' progress through the works/materials, starting with Sandpapers Letters. This multisensory technique meets the individual learning needs of many students. Kinder students begin by tracing the shapes of a Sandpaper Letter with their fingers, while saying the letter, making the sound of the letter and then stating a word that starts with that letter. The students then practice drawing the letter in sand. Next, the students work with the Rainbow Boxes – stacks of drawers which contain picture and word cards. The students match the picture up to the words, starting with simple CVC words (consonant -vowel-consonant). After matching up the words to the pictures, students employ the Moveable Letters to spell out words. After mastering these materials, students move onto “hiding” the words under the picture and attempting to spell the word by just looking at the picture. The students can check their own work (answers are on the backs of the cards). For the next step, students record the words in their notebooks to further practice.

5: School Update

a. Educational Program Director (Wrubleski)

Wrubleski discussed the following: Staff has been prepping for Smarter Balanced Assessment, which will begin in April. The 3rd year students are being introduced to the Smarter Balanced test technology. Following in the Montessori model and as part of their Service Learning Curriculum, sixth graders have been helping guide and train the 3rd year students. The sixth graders are taking the students through the steps of test taking, and offering tips: get good night sleep, eat balanced meal before test, etc. To date there has been no issues with the Network which the staff has been testing.

2017 Grandparents & Special Friends Day: Good turnout although it may have been a little lighter than years past. There were many grandparents but also many “Special Friends” that came to experience a morning with the children in their learning environments.

Spring Scholastic Book Fair: The Fair kicked off on Grandparents & Special Friends Day and although it was not quite as successful as fairs in the past, (likely due to weather closings and delays).

Afterschool Activities: Chess Club, Letgo Your Mind, and Girls on the Run are current after school programs being offered. Girls on the Run, which just kicked off this week, is coached this year by three parents, a welcome change from last year which was run by staff members.

Special Education: New employee Special Education teacher Laura Chesney started in the role but there have been additional referrals and an increase in service demands as a result, so Wrubleski is still filling the role of Special Education Coordinator and attended the associated meetings which currently take up several hours, many days a week. DePasse expressed concern regarding our EPD filling this role in addition to her other commitments. DePasse suggested that this concern be addressed as we plan for the 2017/2018 school year. This prompted discussions regarding the number of students now and the expected growth of service needs from now through the end of the year and from this year to next. The Board as well as Finance Committee will take this into

consideration when planning for the upcoming school year.

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

Charter Renewal: From her report, Levin highlighted Charter Renewal period going forward. Levin has been reviewing and revising/updating the charter. Levin plans to share the draft with the Charter Committee in the upcoming week. The Site Visit by the Charter Renewal Team is set for April 18th and the Renewal Document will need to be sent in to the Renewal Team at least one week before the Site Visit. Levin has been collecting items to submit including student work, parent letters, and results of a parent survey, among other items.

Facility: Levin met new landlord for the building and engaged in a promising conversation regarding our space. Levin touched on the recent issue of the water damage caused by the Union Leader boiler issue. Details were not discussed regarding the event but Levin had communicated all updates and concerns to the Board as they progressed the week of the water event. The estimated damages, repairs and cleaning costs were modest given the damage that could have occurred from the flood.

Lottery: Earlier this week, the school held it's Annual Enrollment Lottery. There were 258 applicants, 116 K applicants; 60% of the applicants were from Manchester; 28 other towns and 18 different languages were represented in the applicant pool. This year's Lottery Official was NH Senator Dan Feltes. There were 4 available spaces in our K class; all other spaces will be filled by siblings (18) and staff children (2). At this time there are no other openings in any of the other grades. All Family Lottery Numbers were pulled at the Lottery and those applicants not awarded a spot in the Lottery were placed on the wait list which is organized by grade.

Charter Day: Levin discussed recent NH Charter Schools Best Practices Conference held at Founders Academy last Friday. Teachers and staff had the opportunity to work with other educators from charters school in NH. Workshops were open to Charter staff and board members.

7. Committee Reports

a. Foundation Report: Leadership Breakfast. The 2017 Leadership Fundraising Breakfast will be held on May 2nd at the Puritan Conference Center. Levin has secured 5 sponsors and is currently looking for others. She hopes to have 140 invited guests; the guest list is organized by Table Captains. School and Foundation Board Members as well as a few other community members will serve as Table Captains. The event is from 8:00-9:30am and the Guest Speaker will be Stan Spirou – Head Coach, SNHU's Men's Basketball Team. A local community leader, and one of the winning-most coaches nationally.

b. Finance Committee: Review of Budget to Actual & Update on Budget Process. Depasse shared that the Budget-to-Actual shows no unexpected trends. The FY18 Budget Draft has been reviewed by the Finance Committee and will be reviewed again by Finance and then will be shared with the Board at the April Meeting.

8. Program: Review & Approval of the 2017/18 School Calendar.

Levin shared the thinking behind the MFCS School Calendar. As per usual, the calendar is similar to the Manchester School District but for the MFCS Early Release/Professional Development days. The 2017/18 has one change from 2016/17 – the addition of a regional meeting of public Montessori schools scheduled for January 2nd and with that, one less Early Release day than previous years. After a brief discussion, the Board decided to vote on the calendar as presented, with the understanding that the Manchester School Board meeting to approve their 2017/18 calendar had gotten snowed out. Should there be any significant changes by Manchester (none are expected), the Board agreed to review the MFCS Calendar again next month.

Motion: Kacavas motioned to approve the MFCS 2017/18 School Calendar; Connors seconded.

Vote: Unanimous approval.

8. Next Meeting Date: April 19th, 2017 at 5:30pm.

9. Adjournment at 7:10pm

Motion: Kacavas motioned to adjourn; Connors seconded.

Vote: Unanimous.



**Executive Director's Report
For the March 22, 2017
MFCS School Board Meeting
Submitted by Meryl Levin**

Required Reporting & Charter Renewal

Most of my reporting time this month has been spent preparing for our **Charter Renewal**. The Renewal Visit Day is scheduled for Tuesday, April 18th. We will host the two Reviewers from the DOE and will also have focus groups of Staff, Parents, Trustees and a student presentation. I have updated our original charter document to reflect current practices and those we predict to be in place going forward, utilizing the charter application as the format for our document.

As part of the Renewal, we are required to have documentation from **Parent Surveys**. I have sent out two such surveys, and am slowly getting responses. As of this writing, I have 107 respondents to the general School Climate/Family Survey for Parent/Guardians of all currently enrolled students, and just 7 for the Exit Survey (sent to those who have chosen to enroll their students elsewhere for their 6th grade year). We have sent a reminder, and I will send one more before I close the surveys.

I have also been soliciting **support letters from individual families** who are willing to share more extensive thoughts about their experiences here at Mill Falls. So far I have two very moving letters, and expect a few more to come in. We are also collecting samples of **student work** to share. In your meeting packet, I've enclosed our updated Org Chart for your review. We will take a few minutes to look at that together on the 22nd.

Laura is currently reviewing the Academic portions of the Charter Renewal Document, while I double check that all the RSA numbers in the document reflect current language (some were updated since our approval). As soon as that is complete, the document will be sent to the Charter Committee for review. If you are not on the Charter Committee but wish to review the full document, please let me know.

I spoke to Michelle Gauthier at the DOE today, and she says we are all set in terms of what is required for reporting purposes – the one item still out is our **School Health Inspection**, but she told me that has been challenging for all Manchester schools to schedule, and she is aware of that.

On the regular reporting front: I have submitted the required reporting on our current **Board of Trustees** (names and terms). I have also completed the lengthy **Civil Rights Data Collection**.

Facility

Well, wow! We survived our first true facility challenge earlier this month, when the Union Leader had a mechanical shut down of its boiler, which resulted in flooding in our lobby and 6 of our 7 classrooms. Clean up began just hours after the water poured down from the ceiling pipes. By chance/luck where the water fell there was very little damage to our shelving, materials, etc. We have gathered the list of items that do need to be replaced and the Union Leader will be taking care of that. We worked really well with the UL Team and appreciate their hard work and concern for the students' well being every step of the way. We did take the most unusual step of having a 'Water Bag Day' on the second day of clean up when we still had to be closed to students (though staff came in to clean up the classrooms). The children had been on break at that point for over 10 days, and in the spirit of getting their minds going again AND of not going too far outside our busing agreement with Manchester, we sent the packets home so that the day could count in our school calendar. This is a regular practice at many traditional schools in the state. We had nearly 100% participation. But, we are a hands-on learning Montessori

environment and though 'Blizzard Bags' work for more traditional settings, that is not something we would do again unless we faced another highly unusual situation.

The **Staff Outdoor Recess Space and Activities Working Group** held its second meeting just before February Break. We have landed on some fantastic ideas generated by the Staff. Trustee Mindy Kacavas will attend the next meeting (hopefully later this month) so that we can map out a plan to create some of the games and other material acquisition/design of stations, etc with volunteer families as soon as it warms up! In this first phase of improvements, we aimed to keep the costs at a minimum because the sale of the building may impact the outdoor space available to us, and yet we were still able to find some exciting and fun options to bring to the children this spring and summer.

The **Fred T. Church Insurance** team has finally provided basic detailing of their insurance proposal to us. They analyzed what we have, and what they would suggest we adjust, and say that the cost will be similar, or if anything a few percentage points higher when we renew our coverage with the same insurer, but through Church in January. I saw them at today's Conference, and expect more information from them in the coming weeks. I will add a bit to that budget line for the 2017/18 year, just to be safe.

MFCS ChildCare Program

Enrollment in our Child Care Program remained fairly consistent this month, as it has in recent months: Before Care has 7 children; Kinder Care (12-3pm) has 16 children 13 of whom are full time/3 part time (and one part-timer will be added in later this month); Kinder Extended Day (12-5:45pm) has 6 students - 2 full time/4 part time; and our After Care Program has 15, 7 of whom are part time/8 full time. We continue to have a small number of families taking advantage of our Drop In options for each program and we always offer Drop In care during our monthly Early Release Day for a flat \$35 per child if not already enrolled in the After Care Program.

Additionally, this week on Parent-Teacher Conference Afternoon, we offered child care at a flat rate of \$5 per child during each family's conference time.

Enrollment

Another WOW! The Lottery 2017 saw the largest entry pool since our founding lottery in 2012. We had 258 applicants this year. The challenge is that we have an incredibly high number of siblings in our Kinder class for next year. So as of this writing, there will only be 4 spots available on Lottery Day and all of those will be in the Kinder room. As I say in the Lottery Information Sessions, it is very hard to say NO to so many more than we are able to say YES to. Additionally, I'm not sure what to make of it, but this year's Lottery Information Sessions were not as well attended as past years. We do not require, but we do strongly urge applicant families to attend. Our **2017 Lottery Official** – State Senator Dan Feltes, will pull the numbers for us at our March 20th Lottery and we will be joined by staff and parent volunteers who will help keep things running smoothly. As always, we have a loan of our Lottery Machine from Tristate.

This year we have received all but 2 **Intent to Return Forms** from our families (they are 5th grade families waiting to hear about other options before completing their forms). As always, we also have a developing 'watch list' generated by conversations with students or parents (most recently during Conference Day) who have told us on the form that they plan to return, but may not. We will continue to talk with those families as the year comes to a close.

On the Friday before February Vacation, one of our Lower Elementary families informed us that that day was the child's last with us. He has moved to another charter school. My work in filling that spot was surprisingly intensive – it took 11 families before I was able to enroll a new child. Again, each family has a different reason for passing on the offered spot (just paid tuition, moved, all set and happy where we are, etc). But we happily welcomed our new student (just after the flood) and she is settling in nicely.

Financial

Special Education reimbursement payments: As of this writing, most sending districts are keeping current with their reimbursements. We are awaiting payment from Manchester for one student in

particular whose IEP was re-written a few months back. I'm in conversation with them about this. At last our reporting systems by both Paraprofessionals and the Special Educators are flowing smoothly. As follow up to the meeting Laura and I had with the Manchester School District's Assistant Superintendent and the Director of Student Services, Laura is completing work on a list of current students IEP needs to help them map out what may be required next year. Though again, we can't accurately predict who will start with us in September, as we've learned each summer.

Work on the **2017/18 Budget** is now underway. I am analyzing our current operating budget for any shortfalls, and working with Laura to discuss additional needs going forward. The Finance Committee will review the initial DRAFT at our March Meeting next week, and then we will share the DRAFT with you in advance of our plan to vote on it, as is our usual process. Please be in touch directly if you have any concerns or things you want me to look into/consider as I draft the document.

Legislative Update

Full Day Kindergarten is being talked about by our new Governor, but it is not fully funded in his current budget. It will be interesting to see how that plays out. We will plan to continue our Kinder After Care Program so that we are able to provide a full day, albeit pay-to-play options for your kinder families next year if there is not public funding for the full day. Our budget will need reflect (or explore) both options.

The bill to increase **funding of NH Charter Schools** by linking the funding to a percentage of the state student average usually named as \$14,500 has failed.

Related, if you have not signed up for the **NH Alliance for Public Charter Schools Newsletter**, and would like to, please visit: <https://nhcharterschools.wildapricot.org/stay-informed/> This newsletter includes helpful legislative updates.

MFCS Community Building & Volunteerism

Generous donations continue to roll in supporting our new Food Pantry. This is helping to subsidize our purchases and acquisitions (some items are free) from the NH Food Bank. We will run the Food Drive until the end of the year. Just so you know, the children have come count on this food to help subsidize their family meals. It is incredibly meaningful to each of the families we are able to help.

The first issue of our new Student Newspaper – **MFCS Roots: Digging Deeper** – was published in time for Grandparents & Special Friends Day this Monday! I've enclosed a link to the PDF for you in our meeting materials, and you can find copies here at school. The students did a great job on the project and we plan to produce one more paper before the end of the year. Special thanks to Colleen Lacroix (our Math Interventionist) who worked closely with me and the children to bring this idea to fruition. The children have shared a copy with the Union Leader Publisher and his team, and it was received with great enthusiasm!

Our Annual Parent-Run **Calendar Raffle Fundraiser** kicked off just before February Vacation. MFCS Parent and project coordinator, Lisa Zonfrillo, has set a goal of \$10,000. The goal is that each student sell 10 Calendars costing \$10 each. Not every student will meet that goal, but some will go beyond the goal, hopefully. There are also prizes for those students who sell the most calendars! [Please click here to purchase a few of your own](#) and/or learn more about the fundraising project. Lisa has put together a terrific set of gift certificates and prizes featured on the Calendar, which is designed by another MFCS Parent, Amie Libby. Printing of the Calendar is sponsored by a MFCS Grandparent - Norman Hebert.

Human Resources

Paper work received this month indicates that the current **unemployment claim** will continue.

We learned just before February Break that our Special Educator out on leave will not be

returning. With that, our **Long-Term Special Educator Substitute** will stick with us through the year-end. She began providing services to students just before February break and is settling in really well here.

Scheduling & Weather-Related

We are in discussion with the Manchester School District regarding busing on our final day of school. The flood seems to have put us out of sync with them by a day. More on this to come.

Foundation News:

Though this section is last, it among the most important of the items I report to you this month. Thanks for your careful review of these final paragraphs!

Our 2017 Leadership Fundraising Breakfast is coming together nicely. It will be held on **May 2nd at the Puritan Conference Center**. As usual, it is a morning affair - **doors open at 8**, and we run a tight program so everyone can be on their way to work by 9:30.

I am hoping I can count on many of you to serve as Table Captains (or co-Captains) at this year's Breakfast. In addition, I am looking to secure 6 sponsors for the event. If you have ANY ideas of potential supporters in the range of \$250/\$500-\$5000 please let me know. I'm happy to make the ask, if you are not comfortable to do that, but would ask that you help to connect me with the potential source!

Last week, Will received a firm commitment from a dynamic and colorful speaker for our Annual Education Leadership Breakfast. We wanted someone who could speak to the importance of a commitment to diversity in public education. Someone who could comment from experience in their personal life as well as in their professional academic career. SNHU **Head Coach Stan Spirou** can deliver that perspective in an enlightening, inspirational and entertaining talk that we think will be well received by our audience.

Coach Spirou is recognized nationally as one of the winning-most coaches in the history of Division II Basketball. More importantly, he is also a beloved local figure by those who know him and work with him. Stan just completed his 32nd season as Head Coach of the Men's Basketball Team at Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) - a career which includes over 625 wins. His personal story is just as compelling and timely as his professional story. Stan came to this country as an immigrant child from Greece speaking no English. He grew up in Manchester's inner city, attended Central High School where he played basketball and later coached, before taking a job as a college coach. As a coach, Stan has recruited scores of young people from many diverse ethnic, cultural and economic backgrounds. His compassionate leadership allowed him to be, in so many cases, both a coach and a father figure to his players. He and his wife, Dr. Pat Spirou (a career Professor in SNHU's Business School), chose to raise their three children in Manchester, even though his career achievements could have taken them to many other institutions across the country. Now Papou (Greek for grandfather) to 6 young grandchildren, he is sure to share his life experience at our Breakfast, with humor and honesty.

Thanks in advance for your help in making our May 2nd event a HUGE success!

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