



*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.*

*The child is capable of developing and giving us tangible proof of the possibility of a better humanity.*

– Dr. Maria Montessori

## **MFCS Agenda for December 20th, 2017**

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

1. **Call to Order 5:51pm; Roll Call & Welcome Public** Roberge, DePasse, Butterfield, Kacavas, Brough, Connors, Levin, Wrubleski. **By phone:** Johnson
2. **Nomination and expected Vote on two new Trustees:** Depasse provided a brief overview of our candidates.  
**Motion:** Butterfield made a motion to accept the nominations of Peter Marr and Judy Wilhelm; Kacavas seconded.  
**Vote** Unanimous
3. **Montessori Moment:** MFCS Lower Elementary Lead Teacher, Susan Rowe, presented a video showing her students engaged in Readers Theater. The students demonstrated reading aloud by sharing the poem/book *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*. Rowe discussed how this promotes reading literacy, improves self esteem, and promotes trust amongst peers.
4. **Public Comment:** No public present.
5. **Meeting Business**
  - a. **Approval of Minutes:**  
**Motion:** Brough motioned to approve meeting minutes from October 2017; Roberge seconded.  
**Vote:** Unanimous.
  - b. **Agenda Review** (2 min, ONLY if necessary due to emergent issue) No updates
6. **School Update**
  - a. **Educational Program Director** (*Please also see attached report*): Wrubleski discussed the recent Staff Visioning Session which Maryclare led. She expressed that the staff felt very comfortable responding. She added that on January 2<sup>nd</sup> there is a Professional Development Day where staff will further discuss and dive into the results of the staff SWOT activity. During the first **Staff Visioning Session** the over arching and common concern shared by MFCS teachers and staff involves the tension between public and Montessori and the challenges we face maintaining the Montessori setting. There are a few things that pull most strongly at the Montessori piece, one of which is the significant size of the special education population within the school, now solidly 20% and growing. Wrubleski shared that the large special education population we have brings many more adults into almost every MFCS classroom than the Montessori classroom is designed to hold. While the Montessori pedagogy aims to grow independent learners, there is a lack of ability for several of the special education students to independently access our curriculum given their needs; and the level of needs in almost every classroom is limiting the time some of our special education students have to complete expected lessons/curriculum because of the schedule involving their special education services. Wrubleski has met with the school's Student Services Coordinator, to begin looking at the data related to the school's growing Special Education population.

Wrubleski also discussed that she now will be **meeting with families** whose children are entering the school mid-year so that they can discuss the Montessori philosophy before the children transition in. The aim is for

parents to clearly understand the teaching environment, which is quite different than a traditional setting, and expectations for our students, and ensure this environment is a good fit for each child.

**b. Executive Director** (*Please also see attached report*): Levin reminded Trustees of the date for our upcoming **Strategic Planning Session - January 27<sup>th</sup>**. She also noted that the recent construction in parking lot have come to a halt due to the weather. She also updated Trustees on the lack of reimbursement from the **Manchester School District** for services provided to the MFCS resident Manchester students since the school year began. She discussed that she spoke with the DOE's internal auditor and voiced her concerns regarding the outstanding reimbursement which grows larger every school day, as services continue to be provided. Levin also discussed the planned **Night of Community** in June which will be held at the Palace Theatre's new space on Hannover Street in Manchester.

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

**a. Finance Committee:** Review of Budget to Actual: Roberge noted that there has been nothing unexpected in our income/expense flow, as shown in the budget to actual report.

**b. Foundation:** Annual Appeal- Levin shared copies of the mailing that went out to those who have previously supported the school financially, and highlighted that some donations have started to come in.

**c. Facility Committee:**

**Motion:** Butterfield motioned to go into closed section to discuss proposed lease amendment; Kacavas seconded. Vote: Unanimous. Butterfield motioned to come out of closed session, Kacavas seconded, vote unanimous.

**Actions:** There were not actions taken during the closed session.

#### **8. Program**

##### **Strategic Planning (Governance Committee)**

**Overview of Strategic Planning:**

Depasse shared that the location will be at the *Back Yard Brewery* on January 27<sup>th</sup> and the Session will run from about 9:00am-1:30pm. Levin noted that we have discussed the staff portion of the SWOT activity. (*see EPD's updates and attached report*). Depasse and Levin will be in contact with facilitator, Heffernan, to determine the agenda and what we need to do to prepare for the day's event.

**9. Next Meeting:** **Wednesday, January 17th, 5:45pm (DePasse, 2 min).**

**10. Adjournment 6:53pm:** Brought motion to adjourn; Kacavas seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous.



**Educational Program Director  
Board Report  
December 18, 2017**

**December Early Release Professional Development:** This month, the entire staff gathered to work with SWOT model to reflect on our school functioning. Maryclare Heffernan facilitated this discussion and we gained powerful information that we will be shared with the board at our retreat to further our growth plan as a school.

**Maternity Leave Plans:** We have been hard at work developing a plan to ensure that during my maternity leave, we will have sufficient support for both the school as a whole and for our parent community. Our plan is as follows: Shannon Helie will step out of the lead classroom position and fulfill the majority of my roles as the EPD. Shannon has been with MFCS since our doors first opened and is familiar with all systems that have been developed from year one through present day. Anya Morales is currently Shannon Helie's assistant in the Glacier room and has worked for the past 3 years within the same role. She is trained in lower elementary Montessori, completing her internship within Glacier and is a certified educator in the state of New Hampshire. Stepping into Anya's position will be Mindy Kacavas. Mindy has worked in various capacities around the school, however the most significant is her 3-year stint as an assistant teacher in the Acadia room. With all of these supports in place, I have not doubt that the school will continue to function and thrive as if I were sitting at my desk on a daily basis.

**Cultural Studies in December:** This year, the kindergarten has focused their cultural study around Jan Brett's story- *The Gingerbread Man*. Students colored and created their own life size gingerbread house, counted and graphed gingerbread men and of course decorated their very own gingerbread house. The lower elementary has focused on 4 different celebrations around the world- Christmas, Kwanzaa, Chanukah, Diwali. The historical significance of these celebrations was discussed, and small projects completed based on the traditions celebrated. The Upper Elementary has taken a more narrowed viewpoint of traditions and decided to look closely at student's family heritage by completing a family tree and deeper study of their family history. On December 22nd, students will be able to bring in items that are significant to their heritage and share with their peers as a representation of their family background.

**Special Education:** We have observed over the last couple of years, that if a student is to withdraw in the upper elementary, typically the student that fills an incoming spot has an IEP. Over the course of the past two weeks, we have had two students leave and both of those spots have been filled with students who have IEPs. To date, we have 32 students on IEPs, and 26 of those students receive direct service from our in-house special education staff. That total number of students that require support is roughly 20% of our student population. I do feel this information is important to our upcoming conversations regarding our growth plan.



**Executive Director's Report  
For the December 20th, 2017  
MFCs School Board Meeting  
Submitted by Meryl Levin**

### **Required Reporting**

I have forwarded our completed **FY17 Audit to the DOE** as per required reporting. Additionally, we will soon complete our quarterly **DOE-25** report for FY18 q1.

### **Charter Office Update**

I have not yet heard any news related to the hiring of a charter office director, though it is my understanding they have been interviewing candidates over the last several weeks.

### **Strategic Planning Related**

Since our last meeting, the Governance Committee met with and agreed to move forward with Maryclare Heffernan – MFCs' Student Services Coordinator – as our facilitator for our Strategic Planning work this year. Following that meeting in which Maryclare discussed with the Committee the overview of the process, Laura and I worked with Maryclare to plan the December Early Release Day around a **Staff Visioning Session**. This session which went extremely well. The information gathered will be shared as part of our Strategic Plan work.

Also related, the **SWOT Exercise** was sent out to all parents. Families were given 2 weeks to log into Survey Monkey to share their voice and thoughts about our Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. That information will also be shared with the Board (once collated in a coherent fashion). We had 72 respondents to the survey.

A reminder that we have settled on **Saturday, January 27<sup>th</sup> (from about 9am-2pm) for our Initial Strategic Planning Session**. Please save the date and let Greg and I know if you won't be able to make it.

### **Facility**

Construction continued this month, both inside 100 WLD (beyond the walls of our school space) and outdoors. However, with the recent freeze in temps, the work outside seems to be at a standstill. I'm awaiting an update, but as of this writing have not received anything in writing from the new landlord.

There was, however progress with regard to conversations related to a possible increase in space for MFCs. We will be discussing this in a closed-session of the December Board Meeting. In preparation for the negotiation and planning, our architect from our 2 previous build-outs, Dennis Mires, put together a rough drawing of how the additional space might be designed to house 2 classrooms and some additional rooms.

### **MFCs ChildCare Program**

Here's how it looks as of this week: BeforeCare (7-8:15am) = 8 children; Kinder (12-3pm) full-time = 12 children, part-time=5 children, extended (12-5:45)=2 full-time; 2 part-time. AfterCare (3-5:45pm) = 11 full-time children, 7 part-time children. Many families have been taking advantage of the drop in option for all programs and we continue to offer Child Care on a first come/first served basis on our Early Release Days.

### **Financial**

**Special Education reimbursement payments:** Payment has been received for many, but not all of the first and second set of bills (September & October services rendered) and this week I sent out billing for November services rendered. Manchester is the district with the most number of

students receiving services, and as of today, they have not yet paid their September or October billing. Laura, Maryclare and I traveled to the District offices for a meeting on November 20<sup>th</sup> with the Superintendent and a number of other staffers, though not including the SpEd team members we work with on day-to-day issues/meetings. We left that meeting with action items related to contracts and reimbursement, and strengthening our working relationship, but do date, there has not been any forward movement from the District, despite a follow up inquiry by me last week which garnered a brief 'we'll be in touch soon' note back from the Superintendent. The Finance Committee continues to monitor the financial impact of the lack of service reimbursement payments, which is now over \$65,000.

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

Our work on securing a new and exciting venue for our **2018 Night of Community** has at last paid off! We will be holding the event this year at the new space on Hanover Street in Manchester which is owned by the Palace Theater. The Palace is partnering with us and hosting the event scheduled for early June, charging only for their bartenders, but waiving the rent cost. Leads on the event are MFCS parents Rachel Marziano and Mel Johansson and we are now working on specific details about food and programming. Should any of you be interested in helping on this event, securing auction items, OR sponsoring it, please be in touch with me directly!

We closed our **Fall Coat Drive** earlier this week and collected over 70 coats from our school community! They were picked up today by staff from Families in Transition/New Horizons.

Additionally, our school community has done an incredible job of responding to our call for food for our **MFCS Food Pantry**, which sends food home with children 3 times per week whose families are food insecure. The donations have helped us provide fresh fruits and veggies and in one case, an anonymous donor donated Market Basket Gift Cards for each of the children's families.

### **Human Resources**

As noted last month, our **Music Teacher** resigned for personal reasons. We have posted the Music Instructor position and hope to fill that in a timely manner. In the meantime, John Choinard has stepped in to sub. Please let Laura and I know if you have any suggestions of people who might be interested in join our team as a long-term sub, or in a more permanent fashion.

This is the season for open enrollment into our **Dental and Health Insurance Programs**. Amazingly, our health insurance broker, Steve Spratt, was able to find a plan for our staff that is nearly identical to the plan we've had for the last few years, but which will cost a few dollars less than last year. That is a near-unique scenario given what's going on currently in the health insurance world.

### **Foundation Update**

This week I designed and mailed our **2017 Annual Appeal**. This mailing goes out mostly to those who have supported us in the past. I will share a copy of the mailing at the Board Meeting. We have gotten three donations so far, and are at \$12,500. We received one extremely generous year-end donation from our long-time funders, the Dolloffs. The Foundation asks that I remind all Trustees, that **MFCS be a priority in your charitable giving**. All donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

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