



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 Minutes for May 16, 2018, 5:45pm

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

1. Call to Order: 5:45pm

Roll Call: Levin, Helie, Roberge, Brough, Kacavas, Marr, DePasse. *Absent:* Johnson, Conners, Butterfield.

2. Public Comment: No public present.

3. Meeting Business

a. Approval of Minutes from April 2018 meeting:

Motion: Marr motioned to approve the April 2018 BOT meeting minutes; Brough 2nd. **Vote:** Unanimous

4. Montessori Moment:

Coleen Costa, Upper Elementary Lead Teacher in the Zion Room demonstrated place value and lowest common multiples using the Montessori Peg Board.

6. School Update

a. Interim Educational Program Director (*please also see attached report*)

Helie discussed the recent trip to the NH Food Bank, where the students prepared mac and cheese packages for food insecure families in our state. She noted that before the trip, each classroom discussed issues related to food access and nutrition. She also shared that the kinder and 3rd year students have been participating in step-up visits to prepare them for their moves into the Lower and Upper Elementary Programs, respectfully. Additionally, she highlighted the Lower Elementary field trip to the Seacoast Science Center. She shared some highlights about teacher appreciation week as well.

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

Levin discussed the "watch list" of students whose families have suggested that the students may not be returning next year. As usual, the majority of those students are 5th graders moving on to other schools that begin in 6th grade. At this time there are no student spots that need to be filled, though she expects that will shift in the coming weeks and over the summer, as it usually does. She also discussed a recent meeting with the Manchester School District's Student Services Coordinator which she, Helie and Heffernan attended. The meeting went well and was productive and the team now awaits response from the District regarding a service provision plan and agreement for next year.

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

a. Finance Committee: Review of Budget-to-Actual – Levin noted there have been no surprise costs for this month and no unexpected trends.

8. Program

a: 2018/19 FY19 Budget Review

Motion: Kacavas moved to closed session to discuss salaries related to the budget: Marr seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous.

Motion: Brough motioned to come out of closed session; Kacavas seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous.

Action: There was no action taken during the Board's review and discussion.

b: Strategic Planning Update:

Levin discussed some highlights from previous planning meetings. Next planning meeting follow the June Board Meeting.

9. Next Meeting: Wednesday, June 13th, 5:30pm (DePasse, 2 min).

10. Adjournment: 7pm. **Motion:** Kavacas moved to adjourn; Marr seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous.



**Educational Program Director
Board Report
May 16, 2018**

Food Bank Trip: On Monday, May 7th the entire school went over to the Food Bank to pack meals for food insecure families. All the classrooms talked and learned about food insecurity as a precursor to our trip. The school was broken into three groups and we walked over to the food bank and once there we made mini mac and cheese meals. From the kindergarten to our sixth years everyone had a hand in the process. They packaged 6,264 meals during that morning visit!

Kindergarten Interviews: On Friday, May 4th, we welcomed our new kindergarten families to Mill Falls. The new students and their families arrived full of excitement and curiosity. Two of our interventionists, our reading coach and Kristin (kindergarten teacher) met and screened all the children. It was so nice to see new families gathered together waiting for their time slots making connections and play dates for the summer!

Step up days: For the last three Fridays, the students have been participating in step up days. These days are designed for all of our students who are stepping up into a new level to spend time in those new classrooms. The current kindergartners came to visit the lower elementary classrooms and the current third years went to visit the upper elementary classrooms. They switch each week so they get to see all three classrooms in that level. It is a lot of fun to watch the students who are currently in these classrooms step up and mentor the visiting students.

Seacoast Science Center Field Trip: The lower elementary traveled to the seacoast science center on May 8th. Once they arrived they learned about tide pools and then got to explore the tide pools on the rocky shoreline. They were able to see and touch lobsters, crabs and various fish. They enjoyed a picnic lunch while taking in the beautiful views and even got to spend some time on the playground.

Teacher Appreciation Week: Last week our staff was showered with appreciation every day. Monday they enjoyed a breakfast provided by admin and received flowers from their students. On Tuesday, many of the students brought in classroom supplies for the teachers like colored pencils, paper towels, markers, pencils and even pens! Wednesday we were treated to a fabulous lunch provided by

one of our parents who truly spoiled us! On Thursday, the teachers received some of their favorite snacks and Friday there was a candy bar!

Placement: Last Wednesday we met to do our placement for next year. This is always such an interesting day as we come together among levels and discuss the students who are moving up. We start by placing third years into upper elementary classrooms and then kindergartners in to lower elementary classrooms. It is wonderful hearing how well the teachers come to know their students over the course of a year or three years.



**Executive Director's Report
For the May 2018
MFCS School Board Meeting
Submitted by Meryl Levin**

Foundation Update

Our **6th Annual Leadership Breakfast on May 15th**, held at the Puritan's Conference Center, was a resounding success. The Breakfast was extremely well attended. Guests included many who have been coming to the event for years and several new guests. The room was filled with people who care deeply about our city, our state and our kids! Manchester's Mayor, **Joyce Craig**, was our keynote speaker; a group of MFCS students shared their voices that morning, some in song and others sharing their thoughts and understanding of the importance of our Montessori Core Values - Grace, Courtesy and Respect. We had close to 180 guests, \$9000 in sponsorship and brought in a total, including sponsorship and donations made by those who were not able to attend, but still sent in funds in support of our event, of: \$27,575

The Foundation's bank account balance is currently: \$282,046. This does include one \$1000 sponsorship for the Night of Community, which was made by PayPal (we use the Foundation PayPal account for online donations).

Required Reporting

This time of year requires the completion of a series of small surveys (including average teacher salaries for next year, number of immigrant students) for the DOE as well as preparation for our annual **End of the Year Report (EOY)** with the DOE – a monster of a report that references extensive info on each student who attended MFCS in a given school year. Once completed, the report is the bases for the final per pupil aid deposit for this school year (generally received in late June).

Strategic Planning Related

Looking forward to spending much of our time after Wednesday night's Board meeting at our final Strategic Planning Session of this school year, which will once again be led by Maryclare Heffernan. This has been a very productive experience for the staff and all those involved in the process.

Facility & Related Changes

Making Community Connections Charter School (MC2) has been in the building for just over 2 months, and there continue to be challenges to our co-tenancy. We continue to observe a lack of supervision of the MC2 students in the area leading to the bathrooms we use (on route to their cafeteria area), as well as outdoors.

We have been told by the facilities person at the building that work on the MFCS adult bathrooms will begin soon, but have no exact information on that.

A reminder that the MC2 program is a year-round program, so perhaps they will have time over the summer to focus more intently on their staffing and culture development.

As you are aware, because of the co-tenancy, the District of Manchester determined that MC2 students and MFCS students shall ride the same buses. This, as you know, has been a very challenging arrangement. There are frequent reports from our students about poor behavior, explicit language, and disrespect for the bus drivers by the MC2 students. There is a bus monitor from the MC2 staff who rides on the buses from time to time, but obviously one guy can't be on each bus, each day. On Friday, Shannon and I met with Dr. Vargas and Amy Allan at the District Offices regarding this busing arrangement and the situations being explained to us by our

students. Dr. Vargas and Ms. Allan decided we should all next meet with representatives from the Manchester Transit Authority and MC2. Shannon and I remain quite concerned with this busing arrangement, but at this time the District is not offering any other plans.

Additionally, we've been told that due to major puddles that continue to collect on the new blacktop area, the area will need to be repaved. Again, we have not gotten any details on that from Peter Levine. We are also waiting for the installation of a safer cover to the grate, which we have been told weeks ago by Mr. Levine has been ordered.

The new field area, which was planned for over the winter with the landlord's broker and Mr. Levine's, was partially fenced in at a size far smaller than what we had been told would be done. IN response to my inquiry, the landlord equated any additional outdoor space with our expanding internally, and has stated that without additional internal space, that is all he will provide for outdoors.

The MFD has now run 3 successful fire drills with the new system, which requires an all-building evacuation. That seems to be going fairly smoothly for us, though I'm sure the UL doesn't love having to evacuate every month for the school drills.

On Monday, Shannon and I will be meeting with members of the NH Homeland Security Department to review our current safety practices and our facility.

Enrollment

This is the time of year when we connect with those families who have suggested that they may not be completing our 7 year program, and instead will be moving their children to other schools (or home schooling). As usual, there has been a flurry of movement this week – one family with 3 children will be homeschooling, others will be moving away, others will return to their neighborhood schools, and still others will be entering other charter schools which begin at 6th grade.

I am working closely with Susanne and the teachers to connect with as many of these families as we can before the school year ends, so that prospective families can visit us before we wrap up the classrooms for the summer (in prep for our annual carpet cleaning in late July). We have already filled a number of the vacant spots, but we do expect to continue to have some movement through the summer. Annually, many families hold spots with us, even as they have already decided to go elsewhere which creates some chaos for us, and also makes it more difficult for new families to have time to visit and/or adjust to joining our school community. We do have hundreds on our wait list, though some of those families will pass up a spot when offered because they are happy where they are, or themselves newly resettled into a school. As always, we will work tirelessly to start the year with a full roster, and expect to once again be able to do so.

MFCs ChildCare Program

Overall the ChildCare Program was successful for us financially this year, as it has been for the last 2 years. We have staffed it with folks from our school program who are familiar with the students, their families and our culture. Susanne is busy signing up families for next year and we will report those numbers as they evolve over the summer and into early September.

Financial / SpEd Related

Special Education reimbursement payments: We did receive a second large payment from MSD, and the District has now paid through the end of March. Currently they owe us for the already billed month of April. I will bill for May and June before we close down for the summer months.

We are still waiting to hear back from the District of Manchester regarding plans for 2018/19 service provision for our Manch students with IEPs. As requested, I have made a proposal in early May, and asked for a response by May 20th or June 1 at the latest. On May 31st, MSD's Director of

Student Services, Mary Steady, wrote saying that due to vacations, she would not be able to get together with her finance people until June 11th. She has said she will get back to me asap after that. In the meantime, I have offered all of our SpEd staff (Teachers and Paras) contracts with parenthetical language saying that the contracts are dependent on the District's funding plan. I am aware of at least 1 staff member who is actively pursuing other employment because of a lack of a solid contract from us. This is very disturbing to us, and I hope to soon have clarity about the plan going forward. As you will recall, the District only has until July 1 to determine a plan, but I have told them that our school closes down on June 25th for this discussion, as I will be leaving the country on holiday. We shall see what happens...

MFCS Community Building & Volunteerism

The final weeks of the school year are jam-packed with activities and volunteer opportunities, and our parents have not disappointed! I worked closely with Rachel Marziano on our **3rd Annual Night of Community Fundraiser**, which was held last night and was a GREAT event. This year, we were joined by my MFCS parent, Kim Robinson, who helped Rachel secure multiple sponsorships to the tune of \$3000(!) for the event, as well as some beautiful art donations for our auction. We will also hold a Fund-A-Need. Our auctioneer, MFCS parent Katie Cote, helped focus our guests on raising funds to help support improvements to our outdoor space. I worked with Rachel to secure the space – the Palace Theatre's new events space beside the theatre - which they gave to us at a very low rate – and the food which was delicious and generously donated by Ann at Ignite/Hooked Restaurants – she is just charging us for her servers. If you see Ann at Hooked/Ignite, or Peter or Tammi at the Palace, please thank them for their support! Live music will be provided by Mr. John Choinard (our former music teacher) and the Ukeladies, which is led by one of our MFCS moms. We had over 100 guests – MFCS staff, families and friends.

Field Day 2018 was a great day, filled with parent assistance, and led by Shannon Helie. The Community Pot Luck Lunch was attended by hundreds and was a wonderful and joy-filled event. Our annual **trip to the beach for our 3rd Year students** who will soon move into our Upper Elementary classrooms, was also made possible with parent-chaperones. In all kinds of ways, large and small, we are seeing parents at school daily who are lending a hand and helping to make our year complete.

Human Resources

Earlier this month, we sent out notification to families in the Glacier, Acadia, Denali and Zion Rooms regarding some staffing changes. To recap: Ms. Shannon will return to her role as Lead Teacher, and Ms. Anya (the Assistant Teacher in Glacier for the last 3 years) is now Montessori trained and will take on the Lead Position in Denali as Ms. Collette will not be returning; Ms. Alyssa, a para in Denali this year, will be joining Shannon as the Assistant Teacher in Glacier; Ms. Susan will not be returning next year, so the Lead in the Acadia Room will be Ms. Tana (she has been our Reading Coach and ELL Coordinator for the last several years) and will be getting her Montessori training this summer; Mindy Kacavas will take over Tana's roles as Reading Coach and ELL Coordinator. Finally, Kristin Ross, the Assistant Teacher in the Zion Room is pregnant, so she will be working with us 2 days per week in the front office during the fall before she welcomes her new child. Shannon and Colleen have been interviewing to fill the Assistant Position for the Zion Room. This will give Roxanne some time to dig in to some more complex projects which are hard to accomplish at the front desk – you will recall we discussed this at the budget review meeting. We are still looking to hire our Fitness Teacher for next year as our current teacher, Elizabeth, just landed a coaching job with BU's Women's Basketball Program.

Legislative Update:

Not much to share here since the session completed. To learn more about charter-related legislation in NH, please sign up to receive members updates from the NH Charter School Alliance. Visit www.NHcharter schools.org.