



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 December 19, 2018

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

1. **Call to Order 5:49, Roll Call & Welcome Public (Butterfield) Roll Call** Present: Butterfield, DePasse, Roberge, Marr, Connors, Levin, Brough, Wrubleski, Trombley (joined the meeting after the nomination vote). Absent: Kacavas, Johnson
2. **Public Comment:** No public present.
3. **Meeting Business**
 - a. **Approval of Minutes** from November 2018 meetings
Motion: Roberge motioned to approve the November 2018 Meeting Minutes; Depasse seconded.
Vote: Unanimous.
 - b. **New Trustee: Nomination & Vote:** Brief discussion regarding candidate, Jeff Trombley, who attended the November MFCS Board Meeting and had a following meeting with members of the Governance Committee.
Motion: Brough motioned to accept the Nomination of Jeff Trombley; Marr seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous.
 - c. **Agenda Review:** Butterfield motioned to go into closed session at 5:58pm; Connors seconded.
Vote: Unanimous. Marr motioned to come out of closed session; Depasse seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous.
Closed Session Actions: No action was taken during the closed session.
4. **Montessori Moment: Tana Gills, MFCS Lower Elementary Lead Teacher:** Tana Gills demonstrated Infinity Street, a work created by Laura Wrubleski, our Educational Program Director. She used bead bars and members of "families" (tens, hundreds) to visually demonstrate place value. "Houses" made of colored paper represent the families (place values) and "mailboxes" represent the comma. The Montessori Bead Bar materials are used as units, tens and hundreds number representation.
5. **School Update**
 - a. **Educational Program Director** (*please also see attached report*): Wrubleski highlighted from her report the Upper Elementary Thanksgiving Feast and the Holiday Studies. In Lower Elementary, the students participated in learning about and activities surrounding Christmas, Hanukah and Kwanzaa. The Upper Elementary focused on a Family Heritage Project. She also highlighted the Paraprofessional Training that the school is holding monthly, led by the Special Education Team. Wrubleski also shared that the full staff will be participating in a Book Club; the first book to be read is *Montessori Madness* with discussions during the bi-weekly staff meetings.
 - b. **Executive Director** (*please also see attached report*): Levin highlighted from her report the need to find a place to host the annual Spaghetti Dinner. Levin also encouraged the Board to participate in the Manchester Proud activities – town halls and the survey. She also reminded Board members of the Annual Appeal conducted each December by the MFCS Foundation, and asked for their support.
7. **Officer/Foundation/Committee/Working Group & Related Q+A**
 - a. **Finance Committee:** The Board reviewed the November budget-to-actual. Treasurer Roberge explained that the budget is on track with no unexpected expenses this month or yet this year.
8. **Program**
 - a. **Policy for Attendance:** The draft policy was discussed in depth and finalized.
Motion: DePasse motioned to approve the policy as amended; Marr seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous. (see final approved policy attached).
 - b. **Facility Issues**
Homeland Security Grant: Levin discussed the federal grant application she recently submitted for fiscal support for security improvements, which were developed following meetings with the NH Homeland Security office as well as the Manchester Police Department. If awarded, requested funds will be used to purchase and install:

- 1) Emergency access Knox Box
- 2) Bullet proof glass resistant layer added to windows in the lobby
- 3) New metal, fire rated Interior Doors.

Motion: Brough motioned to approve the items being requested in the grant with the understanding that the grant would cover 80% of the costs, while the school would be expected to cover 20% of the costs; Connors seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous.

c: Adjacent Space: Levin shared that the landlord recently contacted her to ask for information regarding the school's interest in the expansion space. The Board discussed that our broker, Will Kanteres, will contact the owner's representative to discuss further.

9. Next Meeting: Wednesday, January 16, 5:45pm.

10. Adjournment: Motion: DePasse motioned to adjourn 7:41pm. Marr seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous.



**Educational Program Director
Board Report
December 19, 2018**

Upper Elementary Thanksgiving Feast: Annually, the upper elementary level takes the opportunity of celebrating Thanksgiving as a time to practice manners including grace, courtesy and respect while working as a team to celebrate gratitude. Students prepared the space with placemats, meticulously folded napkins and student designed centerpieces while parents prepared a typical thanksgiving meal. Students shared gratitude followed by a tasty meal with friends. This tradition is always enjoyed by all.

Holiday Studies: The kindergarten began their annual study of the gingerbread stories. Students colored a life size gingerbread house, made food based gingerbread houses and read 9 different gingerbread stories that addressed a variety of story elements. The lower elementary classrooms studied Christmas, Chanukah, and Kwanza over the course of the past month and had a final project day with parent volunteers on Wednesday, December 19th. The upper elementary focused on their family heritage project. Students worked with their families to investigate the origin and history of their family traditions. The students created visual representations such family trees, crests, or journals to represent their family history. This directly relates to the migration of humans and the evolution of cultures around the world.

Volunteering: We've had plenty of opportunities for volunteering most recently. Parents have been making materials, supporting holiday activities such as making gingerbread houses, and making foods for the upper elementary Thanksgiving feast. Additionally, we have had the Junior Monarchs Hockey players volunteering on a weekly basis. These players read to kindergarten students and lower elementary students.

Paraprofessional Training: Monthly, we have offered additional training for our special education paraprofessionals with the intention of improving Montessori and special education knowledge. Last month, the paraprofessionals participated in an overview of the program Zones of Regulation and this month, I gave an overview of the progression of basic math and language materials most often used in the Montessori classroom. Going forward, the plan for training involves social competency, reading IEPs, and job specific responsibilities.



**Executive Director's Report
For the December 19, 2018
MFCS School Board Meeting
Submitted by Meryl Levin**

Required Reporting

The November 1st Per Pupil Aid Form was filed on 11/1/18. This is linked to the periodic per pupil funding deposits we receive throughout the year. We also recently filed our **Free & Reduced Report**, our **English Language Learner Report**, and our **Immigrant Survey**, with the DOE as required.

Board Related

We will be bringing forward the nomination of a new Trustee at our next meeting, and talk briefly about the **Strategic Plan writing, possible name change options, and Montessori Morning Tours.**

This week, Laura and I assigned the first reading to staff related to the Montessori Academy – one of the many programs that grew out of staff discussions during our Strategic Planning work last year. I was able to obtain books at cost from the author, and we have copies for Board Trustees as well. We would like to propose that the Board read the book this winter. The book, **Montessori Madness**, by Trevor Eissler, is written about Montessori from compelling and engaging parent-perspective. It is accessible to all and is sure to provoke some interesting conversations among readers.

Facility

We will be bringing forward for Board Approval the **proposed safety improvements** that were included in our request for federal funds being managed by the NH Homeland Security Department. This request for funds was put together following input from the Homeland Security Department and with the wisdom of former MFCS Board Chair and Construction Manager, Roland Martin. Those funds, should they be awarded, will cover 80% of the cost of proposed improvements, and the school would need to put in the other 20%.

In preparation for our next meeting with the Homeland Security Team, the Staff Safety Committee and Mindy Kacavas met with **Manchester Police Officer** Nathan Linstad, to discuss the police expectations and advice with regards to our safety planning. Out of that we decided that staff will be trained by Office Lindstad in some additional emergency responses. In early January, the Staff Safety Committee will meet again for a full assessment which will include local fire and police, as well as NH Homeland Security staff members, and will be followed by an expected table top exercise with officials in the late spring.

The Fire Marshal completed his **Annual Fire Inspection**. His report has now been filed with the DOE, as per the annual requirement.

The **fence** has not yet been repaired following damage created when a truck turned too close to the corner. The first repair was quickly taken care of by the trucking company who also rents at 100 WLD. The frozen ground is now making repair challenging, I'm told.

MFCS ChildCare Program

Enrollment in our Child Care Program is extremely high this year. In fact, we have a significant waiting list for the AfterCare Program and on most days do not have space for drop-ins. Here's a breakdown of all programs as of this week:

BeforeCare (7-8:15am) = 10 full time; KinderCare (12-3pm) = 8 full time, 5 part time;
AfterCare (3-5:45pm) = 13 full time, 5 part time, plus extended kinders (3-5:45) = 1 full-time, 3 part time.

Financial

SpEd in relation to Manchester: Just before Thanksgiving, we received payment from Manchester for the Sept and Oct 2018 invoices for SpEd services provided by our staff. We have had some forward movement with the **Concord School District**, though they have not yet signed the contract, they held a SpEd Team Meeting and we expect the issues to be resolved in a timely manner. All other Districts are in good standing.

As per previous discussions, we have opened a **Business Savings Account** at the Bank of NH to track those (currently) 3 areas of the budget that we roll over year to year: Facility Maintenance & Repairs; Student Computers & Equipment; and Unemployment Claims.

MFCS Community Building & Volunteerism

Last week we completed our **Annual Coat Drive**. Our wonderfully generous community donated close to 100 coats as well as hats, gloves, scarfs and boots. All were donated to Families in Transition.

On Friday, Roxanne delivered orders of **Sprit Wear** to our kiddos and families. We have a new Spirit Wear Logo this year, which was designed by our new spirit-wear partner. It is dynamic and integrates the word Montessori, as per one of our important strategic planning goals!

In mid-November, MFCS Families participated in the national '**Take a Hike Day**' – another family event being organized by our parents – which took place at Lake Massabesic with some guidance from the Audobon Center.

Help Needed: We have been trying to identify a location partner for our winter **Spaghetti Dinner**. The facility will need to have a kitchen and an event space we can use. We have spoken to the NH Food Bank who cannot host, and are now in conversation with the Manchester technical high school – MST - but have not heard back. If you have any leads, please reach out to me directly!

My recent visit to NEXT Charter School in Derry as part of the DOE's **Charter Renewal Team** was very rewarding. It was fantastic to see their program in action, and better understand the important work they are doing in providing a competency-based program. This is a model that many try, but few in the state have yet had the kind of success in programming that is visible at NEXT. I have filed my contribution to the report, which will be brought before the NH Board of Education for their official vote on NEXT's renewal at an upcoming meeting.

In early December, we hosted 4 round-table discussions led by Liz Canada, the Community Engagement Coordinator for the **Manchester Proud initiative**. I arranged for Liz to meet with representatives of our school community – 2 sets of parents, a group of staff members and a group of students. The goal was to be sure that experiences of families, staff and students at charter schools are part of the Manchester Proud's data-collection efforts. All participants reported that the conversations were rich in content and they really enjoyed the opportunity to share their voices. We aim to set up one final session for Liz to meet with graduates of MFCS in the New Year. With regard to my direct work with Manchester Proud, stay tuned for the upcoming announcement about the group we have selected to direct the research and development of the Strategic Plan. The selection process has been both thoughtful and carefully done and has included members of District Leadership, the Teacher's Union, members of the business community as well as higher education experts, and a community health expert, among others. [To learn more about Manchester Proud, please click here.](#)

Foundation News:

Last week the **Foundation's Annual Appeal** was mailed out (I'll have a copy for each Trustee at the meeting). The ask goes out to about 150 people, all of whom have donated to the Foundation at some point in the past. The ask featured student artwork, as it always does, as well as words from a MFCS parent in support of our school. A reminder that MFCS Trustees are asked to contribute to the school in a meaningful way during the course of each year. The Foundation thanks Trustees and all community members for supporting the work of securing funds for our school's ongoing sustainability.

The Foundation currently has \$296,480 in its **account**. # # #



MFCS Attendance Policy

Purpose: Time lost from the classroom is essentially irretrievable; the experiences, discussions and the uniqueness of the classroom learning process require school attendance. Establishing good attendance habits early will better equip young people toward being productive members of society. Classroom attendance is considered to be an integral part of the student's course of study.

Attendance Guidelines & Expectations: Mill Falls Charter School (MFCS) takes attendance very seriously and will enforce and comply with the NH law relative to attendance *RSA 193.1 Duty of Parent: Compulsory Attendance by Pupil* and the NH law relative to truancy: *NH RSA 189 (189:34 Appointment, NH RSA 189:35 Truancy Defined and NH RSA 189:36 Duties)*.

The State of New Hampshire views school attendance as one of the primary indicators of a child's level of success in school. As such, New Hampshire state law requires every person having custody of a child to cause their children, ages six through sixteen, to attend school regularly during all the time the public schools are in session.

At *Mill Falls* it is asserted that student attendance rates impact student learning and affect a school's culture. Montessori philosophy requires that we respect the child's concentration and follow the development of each child. In addition, teachers spend time and energy preparing daily curriculum and lessons. Extended medical or unexcused leave may require an academic assessment upon return.

When a child is absent, the parent/guardian must notify the school daily, as per the procedures mapped out in the Family Handbook.

Excused absences include but are not limited to the list below and require documentation, as noted:

- Illness of student or immediate family member
- Death in the family
- Religious holiday
- Scheduled medical/dental appointments if such cannot be scheduled outside of the normal school hours
- Chronic illness
- Classes missed due a student attending his/her IEP or 504 plan meeting
- Extreme weather conditions if the school is open
- Court appearances
- The administration shall determine if an absence is excused for any other reason not listed above.

Excessive excused absences will be addressed on a case-by-case basis to determine if there is a pattern of non-attendance. Those with a pattern of extensive absences will be notified by the administration.

Unexcused absences include but are not limited to:

- Absences as a result of incomplete immunizations records (without appropriate waiver on file)
- Family vacations outside of the established school calendar
- Leaving school grounds without permission during school hours
- Absences determined by the administration to be unexcused for any other reason not listed above.

Extensive unexcused absences shall be addressed on a case-by-case basis to determine if there is a pattern of extensive absence. Those with a pattern of extensive absences will be notified by the administration.

Loss of Contact with an Enrolled Family:

If, after 10 consecutive school days of student absence (or earlier at the school's discretion), and no contact from the family, and no means of generating contact with the family despite every effort by the

school to make contact, the administration may determine that the student be un-enrolled. At that time, the student would be removed from the school roster, and his/her spot at this public chartered school would be filled by another child on the wait list. In order to have an opportunity to re-enroll, the child would need to be entered into a new lottery, and would not have any preference in that lottery process.

Approved by MFCS Board of Trustees, 12/19/18