



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 November 13, 2019

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

1. Call to Order, Roll Call & Welcome Public

Butterfield called the meeting to order at 6:03pm

Role Call: Present: Butterfield, Connors, Levin, Marr (by tel.), Talbot and Trombley. Corriveau joined the meeting after the vote below. Absent: DePasse and Johnson

2. Governance Committee – Nomination of Garth Corriveau to the Board of Trustees

On behalf of the Governance Committee, Butterfield brought forward Garth Corriveau to serve on the Board of Trustees.

Motion: Trombley moved to accept the nomination of Garth Corriveau to serve on the MFCS Board of Trustees; Connors seconded the motion. **Vote:** Unanimous.

3. Public Comment: No public present

4. Meeting Business

a. Approval of Minutes from October 2019 meeting

Motion: Trombley moved to approve the October 2019 meeting minutes; Butterfield seconded.

Vote: Unanimous.

5. School Update

a. Educational Program Director *(please also see EPD Report)*

Wrubleski reported that her work this month is largely dedicated to organizing assessment results and overseeing the production of progress reports. This week all progress reports are being reviewed and will be sent to the families electronically on Friday. Parent-Teacher Conferences will be held next week.

Wrubleski shared that this year's end of October All-School Project featured a new focus for the Lower Elementary called "Cultural, Who am I?". Each classroom picked a different area of the biology curriculum and prepared a "Who am I?" to share with their fellow Lower Elementary classmates. The students dressed up and provided clues and, while their peers guessed who or what they were. For example, Vertebrate and Invertebrate and Living and Non-living. Both the students and teachers enjoyed this new twist on the annual event which is held the close to Halloween. Meanwhile, our Kinders dressed as favorite characters from their favorite children's books, and our Upper Elementary Students shared summaries of their favorite books as part of their Book Bananza.

The Green Thumb Program is a new after school club being taught by the Art Teacher, Melissa Fortin. This program focuses on learning about art and nature. This program is a little different than the Arts and Crafts Club which is also running now and is being taught by Ms. Kristin and Ms. Shannon. Artwork from both clubs has been featured in our newsletter.

b. Executive Director *(please also see ED Report)*

Levin informed the Board that last week she was contacted by the NH DOE regarding the lease aid which is was approved as part of the newest state budget. The aid this year is less than originally

expected, coming in at \$8400. Later this week, Levin will submit the application for the lease aid funds, which requires the estimated utility costs for the year, a number which she has just gotten from the 100 WLD landlord.

Levin provided a Legislative update regarding the \$46M federal grant in support of charter schools which was recently awarded to the New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDOE). This grant targeted funds to support the state's Charter School Program (CSP). NH charter schools hoping to expand or replicate are only eligible if they have shown to be high-performing charter schools. Mill Falls is mentioned in the grant, though all schools will need to apply for grant funds, in order to access them. Last Friday, the Joint Legislative Fiscal Committee voted to table a request by NHDOE to accept the first portion of the \$46M in federal grant funds. This vote to table passed along party lines with 7 Democrats voting in favor, and 3 Republicans voting against. If the grant isn't accepted by the legislature, the grant funds will not be made available. Garth Corriveau confirmed that this will be revisited by Joint Legislative Fiscal Committee on December 13, 2019.

Levin reminded the Board that June 6, 2019 has been confirmed for the Annual Night of Community. The event will be held at the Palace Theatre's Spotlight Room, as it has been since 2018. If anyone is interested in assisting with securing sponsorship, artwork, or have other ideas, please let her know.

6. Montessori Moment: Laura Wrubleski, EPD: Observations in our Public Montessori School

Wrubleski explained the new coaching model which she is implementing as part of the work she is doing during this year's Montessori Audit. As a Montessori Coach, Wrubleski reviews each classroom weekly and hosts a weekly review meeting of the observations with the Lead Teacher.

The observation tool she uses has been created by the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector (who is working with the school on the Audit), and outlines various aspects of Observing Work Engagement in the classroom. Wrubleski explained that this work focuses on observing the students in 2-minute periods, looking at 6 different levels of activity and engagement in the classroom. In addition, she observes the student work with Montessori materials, ensuring that they are engaging with manipulatives and not alternative methods. Finally, she records a few "wonderings" about the observation, which are reflected upon with the teacher at their weekly meeting together.

The observation tool records exactly what she sees in the classroom. The observation and gathering of work engagement data is typically performed in 15 to 20 minutes. The weekly conference with the teacher is typically 20 minutes. The observation is not intended to be supervisory, but rather an opportunity to gather data and an opportunity to ask questions with the teachers, while learning more about the lessons and the classrooms. Wrubleski feels that this coaching method creates a positive approach, and the teachers seem to have embraced the process as well.

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

a. Finance Committee

1. Review of Budget-to-Actual

Levin reviewed budget-to-actual with the Board. She highlighted that the funding for special education supplies is higher than expected on this report. This is attributed to the fact that the Title funds had not arrived by the end of this reporting period (October 31) to offset. In addition, special education payments have not arrived; as expected as payments are always in the arrears one month in our reimbursement model. We currently only have 3 Districts to bill for services: Hooksett, Goffstown and Manchester

2. Health Insurance Increase

Levin explained that in the last number of years, health insurance costs for qualifying staff have been reasonable, without a lot of fluctuation. Mill Falls provides a health insurance benefit of \$5100 for each full-time professional staff member, and this amount must be applied to the plans that we offer. Currently, the cost is about \$26.00 per pay period for an individual. This coverage is a grandfathered coverage which creates an equal cost for all.

Mill Falls' insurance broker presented various options for consideration for renewal in January; the current plan's costs increased significantly. The Finance Committee reviewed the increase that would take effect in January 2020 and discussed covering the difference of the increase until the next renewal. Levin has also been asked to explore additional plan options, before determining what plan or plans will be offered to staff in 2020. Given the national trend of increase costs of health insurance, the Finance Committee and Board will discuss various options to be considered for future renewals and how this impacts the benefits package for the full-time professionals of Mill Falls.

8. Review of Strategic Plan Draft (Governance Committee)

Levin briefly reviewed the Strategic Plan summary documents that she shared with the board. She noted that the draft which is quite long, now needs to be cut back to more clearly share the results of the strategic planning work. Butterfield discussed that we will want to tailor the reporting to also reflect the progress that has been achieved to date. Butterfield and Levin reminded the Board that the intent of the plan is to be shared as a report to the community. It should encapsulate the goals, how we will get there, and the good work done in the last few years. The goals should be presented with metrics.

Levin stated that our goals are robust, but noted that they don't include a focus on tracking student progress, which could be seen as unusual for a school. The Board discussed that reason for that, which is that the Strategic Planning work was done not in a time of crisis (student progress is strong), but to focus on opportunities for continued organizational improvement.

Talbot stated that we could consider incorporating student tracking into the plan with a goal of sustaining the positive results achieved over the past years. It is important to focus on other key initiatives, while sustaining the positive student results.

Connors stated that the accountability of the plan is important and suggested the newsletter as a way to communicate the plan and specific data points with regard to the strategic plan's goals.

Butterfield indicated that a meeting will be set for the Governance Committee to refine the plan communication and bring it back to the board for approval.

9. Next Meeting: Wednesday, December 18, 5:45pm

10. Adjournment

Motion: Connors moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:31pm; Trombley seconded the motion.

Vote: Unanimous.



**Educational Program Director
Board Report
November 14, 2018**

Afterschool Programs: This month we have 2 different afterschool programs. Tana Gills and Kristin Lang are running an in-house chorus program. Their goal is to learn enough songs that they will perform at a local nursing home and for an in-house assembly. Additionally, we have the very first crochet club taught by Laura Blouin. This hobby aligns nicely with the peaceful approach students take to deal with stress within the classroom. On Tuesdays in the afternoon, our very own music teacher Cassie Pepler is working with the kindergarteners on music and movement. They LOVE the opportunity to sing and dance!

Assessments and Progress Reports: This year teachers embarked on the same path of assessment as past years. Teachers administered the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark assessment for reading, the Scholastic Math Inventory for math, DIBELS for reading fluency and a writing prompt that was scored using the 6 Traits rubrics. Teachers then will take this information in conjunction with their observations and work samples to analyze a student's performance within the Montessori continuum. This data is input into ALMA, our in-house online reporting service and parents received official reports on Friday, November 9th. Parents and teachers will meet on November 15th to discuss these reports.

Science Showcase: For the first time this year, the upper elementary team chose to organize a science showcase for one of the Montessori science units the students studied this fall. The Work of Air is a series of lessons developed to study all properties of air. Some of these properties include air has weight, air occupies space, air exerts pressure and air expansion by heat. Students then observed experiments on these properties, followed by the opportunity to practice additional experiments within a group as a showcase. Students created posters to describe their experiments and were available to showcase the experiment first-hand to visiting parents and friends afterschool on November 8th.

Book Bonanza and Amazing Authors: Another new activity for the upper elementary this year was Book Bonanza. Students picked a newly read chapter book and completed a book review on that book. Students summarized the storyline, wrote a recommendation and presented this project to their peers. To present, students dressed up like their favorite character of the book and participated in the parade at the end of the day. Kindergarten and lower elementary also did studies on characters and participated in the parade.

Upper Elementary outing: The Derryfield School invited our upper elementary students to attend a student-acted and produced play, *Bye Bye Birdie*. This opportunity is always a fantastic community event and a chance for students to soak in culture and practice their grace, courtesy and respect outside of our setting.



Executive Director's Report
For the November 13, 2019
MFCS School Board Meeting
Submitted by Meryl Levin

Required Reporting

This month, we reported our **Per Pupil Enrollment Form** which is linked to our second round of state funding for the 2019/20 school year.

There continue to be a number of small surveys and data points that we have reported to the DOE, as required annually.

Board Related

Following our last Board Meeting, which was attended by Garth Corriveau, Naomi Butterfield and I met with him to further discuss Board Service. The Governance Committee will be bringing forward his nomination at this month's meeting for a discussion and expected vote by the full Board.

Additionally, I have been working with the shared **Committee Goals** established at the October meeting in order incorporate them into the **Board's Strategic Planning** work.

Facility

As we struggle to find storage solutions, we are looking for cabinets that can be hung on the wall. We do have a lead via staffer Melissa Fortin, but if you have a lead to any other sources of gently used/still in very good shape wall mount cabinets that can be repurposed for use here, please speak to me directly.

Last week we received word that the state budget included **building aid for charter schools**. The aid level this year will be significantly less than expected (though as you recall we did not build our budget around this). We now need to complete our request for those funds. I have all paperwork in order, but am waiting to hear from the landlord regarding one element of information required on the application. If all is approved for us, we will be getting approximately \$8400.

Technology

It is expected that later this month, our **Tech Consultant** and I will meet with Greg DePasse to further refine the work ahead of us to comply with our new tech/data protection policy and other recently passed laws related to technology and data safety.

MFCS ChildCare Program

Enrollment in our **Child Care Program** is extremely high this year. In fact, we currently still have a wait list for the AfterCare Program. Here's a breakdown of all programs as of this week:

BeforeCare (7-8:15am) = 10 full time, 0 part time; **KinderCare** (12-3) = 7 full time, 6 part time; **Aftercare** (3-5:45pm) = 15 full time, 8 part time and 5 full time **Extended Kinders** (3-5:45).

Enrollment

Grace Eaton, our new Project Manager, and I have begun the planning for our 9th Lottery(!) which we will hold this winter. We will be updating the application form for the year as usual, and also updating relevant web pages and information session paperwork. Please encourage friends, neighbors and colleagues to consider applying to Mill Falls, and if they are interested ask them to send us an email at admissions@millfalls.org so we can add them to our Lottery Information List. The 2020 Lottery Enrollment Period will open just after the new year.

Financial

SpEd: As of the end of October, we had not yet received any reimbursement payments from the sending districts we work with; the payments we have received since the end of October will not be seen in the October Budget to Actual.

Title Funds: We continue to access Title Funds to support many of the programs we are doing this year including our Montessori Audit; several Professional Development opportunities; an all-staff book study; and resources for our English Language Learners and their teacher, Mindy. Our bookkeeper and I have come up with a straight-forward tracking system to be able to monitor the flow of expenses and Title Fund reimbursements. I am required to request reimbursements monthly via the DOE's website, in order to generate those payments.

While the Field Work for our **FY19 Audit** has been completed, I learned this week that the auditor will still need some time to complete the audit itself. We have applied for an extension in relation to the AG's portion of the newly required audit reporting. The Audit itself is not due to the DOE for several months.

This week, I received information regarding our health insurance rates for plans offered to qualifying staff. There is a significant uptick in those costs for the first time in our existence. The Finance Committee will be discussing this and we will bring the summary of our discussion and any recommendations to the full Board meeting this month.

Legislative Updates

Late Friday, we learned that the Joint Legislative Fiscal Committee voted to "table" a request by the New Hampshire Department of Education to accept the first portion of over \$46 million in **federal grant funds**, which were awarded to the state in September. The vote to table passed along party lines with 7 Democrats voting in favor and 3 Republicans voting against. It is not entirely clear what the next steps will be in this process.

MFCS Community Building & Volunteerism

Last week, a small group of Mill Falls Students, guided by our Lead Teacher and Assistant Educational Program Director Shannon Helie, attended the **12th Annual Delta Dental Student Leadership Summit**. For the last three years, Mill Falls Students have had the opportunity to participate in the Summit, where they work together in a small group alongside many other public school students from across the state, to develop their leadership skills and brainstorm projects aimed at positively impacting their schools. Our Student Team was comprised of 4th and 5th graders. Following the student presentation at the end of the Summit, the group was selected for an extra form of support by Frank Tansey of Pepsi Co, who will provide a sponsorship in support of the students' project, the **Kindness Globe**. Details about the project to follow.

This weekend, we held our annual **Pancake Breakfast** at the Sweeney Post on Saturday from 7:30-10am. This fundraiser is popular each year; and was well attended again this year.

We have confirmed the date of **June 6th, 2020 for our Annual Night of Community**, will be held at the **Palace Theatre's Spotlight Room, as it has been since 2018**. If you'd like to lend a hand - securing sponsorship, artwork, or have other ideas - please let me know!

This year, I have teamed up with our new Project Director, Grace Eaton, to work with our **Student Newspaper Editorial Team**. Our first edition of the paper is due out right before we break for December Vacation. We have a record number of students participating this year - 16 - and look forward to some great stories. We will share the paper with you once it has 'gone to press'.

Foundation News:

The Foundation currently holds **\$376,918** in its accounts.

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