



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 December 18, 2019

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

1. Call to Order, Roll Call & Welcome Public

Roll Call: Corriveau, Connors, Levin, DePasse, Butterfield, Marr, Wrubleski, Trombley, Johnson (on the phone);
Absent: Talbot.

2. Public Comment: no public present.

4. Meeting Business

a. Approval of Minutes from November 2019 meeting

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

Vote: Unanimous.

5. School Update

a. Educational Program Director (*please also see Wrubleski's attached report*)

Wrubleski discussed the following:

- **Cultural studies** – As part of our December cultural work, our younger students studied the holidays (Chanukah, Christmas, Kwanza); and our Upper Elementary Students completed their Family Cultural Background Study. This annual project has become a meaningful way for our Upper El students to explore and share their family stories – to discover many things including the fact that there are many similarities among so many different families and cultures.

- **Electives Initiative** – Wrubleski shared her developing plan to offer extra-curricular activities that can be linked to our curriculum. There remains much work to do to make this a successful program including finding people in the community to volunteer, figuring out what kids are interested, etc. She shared this work in progress idea with the Board, in hopes that Trustees may have some ideas for activities and people to approach. The goal is to bring in alternative forms of education for our students which could light a fire that we might not have in a classroom setting. This year's trial is expected to be 1 session of 4 weeks where several people will come and work with the students for an hour each week for 4 weeks. Wrubleski will think about size of groups and number of volunteers needed. Some activities could be combined levels (Lower and Kinder / Lower and Upper), some might be more leveled. Corriveau shared an idea that members of the Cashin Senior Center might be able to do knitting or other activities with the children. He also noted this could be free publicity for organizations who offer fee-based programming for kids, and they might be willing to work with us for free in exchange for the publicity. Butterfield noted that all volunteers will need background checks (as per our volunteer policies). Wrubleski noted she will ask for plans from each person who does sign up so that the plans are clear and productive and achievable.

b. Executive Director (Levin)

Levin shared that Facility Committee Member, Will Kanteres, reached out to Roger Deiker, the broker for the landlord at 100 William Loeb Drive, after having read on-line that a section of the building has leased. We have not yet gotten any official notice from the landlord of a new lease.

Levin also touched on the cost analysis she is doing in connection with Full Day Kinder. In October, the state legislature approved funding for full-day kinder, though it is not required.

Levin shared copies of the MFCS Foundation's 2019 Annual Appeal with Trustees.

She also noted that she finalized the plan for our staff health insurance for 2020, and all paperwork was being completed for the coverage that goes into effect on 1/1/2020.

6. Montessori Moment: Lauren Kolbe, MFCS Lead Upper Elementary Teacher shared a Montessori Math work Geometry work: the area of rectangle.

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

a. Finance Committee

Review of Budget-to-Actual: Levin noted that there are no unexpected trends in the report.

8. Next Meeting: Wednesday, January 15, 2020.

11. Adjournment: DePasse moved to adjourn at 6:31; Connors seconded. **Vote:** unanimous.



Executive Director's Report
For the December 18, 2019
MFCS School Board Meeting
Submitted by Meryl Levin

Required Reporting

Some of the surveys and data points that we have reported to the DOE recently include: the Immigrant Data Survey, and our ELL Roster, as well as our DOE-25 FY20, Q1.

Facility

Again sharing this piece in case there are some resources among Trustees: 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.

Earlier this month I completed the requested paperwork related to acquisition of **building aid for charter schools**. As noted in last month's report, the aid level this year will be significantly less than expected (as you recall we did not build our budget around this). Additionally, we were required to report on the estimated costs associated with utilities that are folded into our gross lease.

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

Technology

I am continuing to work with our **Tech Coordinator** as we make steps to comply with our new tech/data protection policy requirements, and other recently passed laws related to technology and data safety. Greg continues to be a very generous resource as we move through this process.

MFCS ChildCare Program

Enrollment in our **Child Care Program** remains 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) = 12 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

We have completed the preparation for our 9th Enrollment Lottery(!). The enrollment period will begin on January 2 and run through March 16th. During that time, we have 4 Information Sessions scheduled for those interested in applying to our Enrollment Lottery. Please help us spread the word about our upcoming 2020 Lottery - 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. You can also direct them to our website - <https://millfalls.org/the-2020-lottery> - where the Lottery Enrollment details are housed. There they will find dates of the Information Sessions as well as link to the application which will be live as of Jan 2 at 9am. Our 2020 Lottery Day is scheduled for March 25th at 4:15pm.

Financial

SpEd: We have been receiving regular payments from all sending districts with SpEd students for whom we provide services.

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 a straight-forward tracking system to monitor the flow of expenses and Title Fund reimbursements. You will therefore see some changes in our monthly budget to actual in budget item areas that link to the title funding.

Our auditor wrote to me last week saying we can expect our **FY19 Audit** financial statements from him before we break for the holidays. A reminder, we have applied for an extension in relation to the AG's portion of the newly required audit reporting, and the Audit itself is not due to the DOE for several months.

Since the last meeting, we finalized the plan for our **staff health insurance for 2020**. We stayed with Anthem, and now offer 2 options from the family of grandfathered (pre-ACA) plans we have offered since we began offering coverage. One of the two plans has a \$3000 deductible (with a very high monthly fee) and the other has a \$5000 deductible with a monthly fee that is actually less than the fee for the 2019 coverage. Qualifying staff members have made their plan selection, and that coverage will begin on Jan 1. Thanks again for the hearty discussion last month about this. I was really pleased to work with our broker, Steve Spratt, to figure out a more affordable option for those who wanted it.

Legislative Updates

On Friday, the NH Joint Legislative Fiscal Committee voted on whether or not to accept the first portion of over \$46 million in **federal grant funds**, which were awarded to the state in August. As Matt Southerton, ED of the NH Charter School Alliance has explained it, "Under the terms of the federal award, funding was to be prioritized for programs seeking to serve New Hampshire's economically and educationally disadvantaged students by awarding up to \$1.5 million to school districts and individual schools seeking to serve these populations. Additional funding was also available for the expansion or replication of high-quality schools." The Committee voted to reject the federal funding. This story made national news, here's a link to the story in *The Washington Post*: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/12/13/who-turns-down-federal-money-legislators-new-hampshire-half-million-charter-school-grant-devoss-education-department/>

MFCS Community Building & Volunteerism

Last week we completed our **Annual Coat Drive**. Our wonderfully generous community donated close over 80 coats as well as hats, gloves, scarfs and boots. All were donated to Families in Transition.

Last Friday night, we hosted our annual **Movie Night**. Parents are invited to drop off their kiddos for a movie and snack, while the parents get a night out during this busy season. We had over 60 children join us and some wonderful staff members who ran the evening.

On January 11th, I hosted **NH Senior Senator Lou D'Alessandro and NH Education Commissioner Frank Edilblut** for a morning tour and discussion about our public Montessori program. I was asked to host the two following the table vote in November of the Federal Charter School Grant Funds. Lou has been to the school before; his daughter was one of the school's founders. The Commissioner has also been to Mill Falls twice before. Special thanks to the two students who shared their love and understanding of Montessori with our guests.

Our Project Manager, Grace Eaton, recently delivered orders of **Sprit Wear** to our kiddos and families. The clothes feature our new Spirit Wear Logo, which was designed by our 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 organized by our parents – which took place at Lake Massabesic with some guidance

from the Audubon Center. MFCS Kinder mom, Kate Corriveau, led the hike and related treasure hunt.

Our own, Maryclare Heffernan, shared her love of art and creativity in mid-November, holding a **staff watercolor instruction workshop**. As you know, Maryclare is an accomplished artist and is shown throughout NH and beyond. The staff thoroughly enjoyed the workshop!

On November 25th, I appeared as the 'speaking from experience' panel member at a discussion about education. The event was co-hosted by Results for America, the UNH Carsey School of Public Policy, and the UNH the Warren B. Rudman Center for Justice, Leadership, and Public Service, and was held in Concord. Results for America is a national nonprofit organization that is helping decision-makers at all levels of government harness the power of evidence and data to solve our world's greatest challenges. My fellow panelists were Mora Segal, CEO of Achievement Network, a nonprofit dedicated to educational equity and Senator and Presidential Candidate, Michael Bennet who served as the Superintendent of the Denver School System for a decade. It was a rich and engaging conversations with great questions from the audience.

A reminder: 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!

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 members of our MFCS Community - a parent, teacher, and two students. 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 holds **\$376,704** in its accounts.

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

December Early Release Professional Development: We decided to utilize our early release time this month to reflect on classroom practices and structures to best meet our learners. Through the Montessori Audit that was performed last May, we have been able to outline areas that can be tweaked that will help better align our school with the Montessori Philosophy. Utilizing this time to work as teams is essential for moving the process forward.

Parent Teacher Conferences: The first conferences of the year were held just before Thanksgiving. Parents and teachers are afforded 20 minutes to look over the progress report that was sent out via ALMA one-week prior and to celebrate strengths or discuss ways to support each child individually. This conference is very well attended annually and essential to our mission of working with parents collaboratively as a team.

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 19th, 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.

Afterschool Programing: Ms. Tana took on the job of our all school chorus leader! Students learned songs of the season and performed at our all school meeting last Wednesday. Wrapping up is our arts and crafts club run by Ms. Shannon and Ms. Kristin. Lower el students worked on weaving, beading, and watercolor resistance with salt and wax.