



*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 Meeting Minutes for January 15, 2020**

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 6:01PM

**Present:** Butterfield, Connors, Corriveau, Johnson, Levin, Talbot, Trombley, Wrubleski; **Absent:** Marr, DePasse; **Special guest:** Sara Bee

### **2. Announcements/Updates**

**Governance Committee:** Butterfield introduced Sara Bee to the Board of Trustees for consideration as a new Board member.

### **3. Public Comment:** No public present

### **4. Meeting Business**

**a. Approval of Minutes** from December 2019 meeting

**Motion:** Connors moved to approve the December 2019 meeting minutes; Trombley Seconded.

**Vote:** Unanimous.

### **5. School Update**

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

Wrubleski provided an overview of the monthly Professional Development program which was led this afternoon by Biff Maier of Lexington Montessori, and co-founder of METTC Montessori Training Program. Maier is a highly trained Montessorian, an amazing speaker who explored how we support the child in every way. He engaged our staff, both experienced Montessorians as well as those not Montessori trained, guiding them through the key elements of Montessori education as designated by NCMPS. His discussion was about the obstacles staff may encounter as they seek to implement the key elements of our public Montessori program, and provided ideas and space for staff brainstorming for forward movement beyond the obstacles. The targeted challenges included: the "fount of knowledge syndrome" (teacher dictated) with a focus on helping staff develop a more student-directed environment; lack of resources; not enough time; the perceived lack of student motivation; and scaffolding imbalance of too little or too much support. The next steps from this professional development session is to reflect on this approach, bring it back to the collaborative meetings, one-on-one coaching sessions and plans move forward with these new solutions.

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

Levin shared that she has learned that Catholic Charities will be a new tenant in the building. MC2 will be moving downstairs. Overall, this is good news, however, it changes the ability to expand for Mill Falls in any significant way as the new tenant will be taking the currently empty space beside the school near the front bathrooms. Fortunately, financially, we are in the position to have the flexibility to look around for a new potential location in anticipation of the end of our lease, if that is deemed desirable. There is 2 years remaining on the lease.

Corriveau mentioned that there is currently a bill at the State House, that directs school districts with excess school buildings to give first option to charter schools. Levin stated that we have permission from the NH

Board of Education for additional students, if we were to expand our facility capacity. We are not in a position to take on more students in our current space.

Levin noted that to date, we currently have received over 80 applicants for the 2020 Enrollment Lottery. The first Lottery Information Session was last week and three more are scheduled. She reminded the Trustees that as they talk about lottery enrollment, that eligible students must be 5 years old by September 1 to enter the Lottery. Levin strongly recommends that parents interested in enrolling their child/children in the Lottery attend the information sessions so they will have the information to make an education choice that is right for their family. Levin is seeking a community leader to be this year's Lottery Official, and welcomes suggestions from the Board.

The Foundation's Annual Appeal has experienced incredible community support and is currently up from last year, with 22 donors thus far with a total of \$15,681 contributed.

The Audit is complete. The audit materials will be sent in to the DOE and uploaded to the Mill Falls website.

## **6. Montessori Moment: Laura Blouin, Upper Elementary Lead Montessori Teacher**

Blouin presented the Montessori moment, explaining the parts of a root tip. She demonstrated a material she made her students use to help them visualize the root system and understand the jobs that each part is responsible for. She explained that the students research the job of each part and research the Latin root of the words as an extension activity.

This was a demonstration of using teacher-made material with nomenclature (vocabulary), along with the manipulative aspect used to guide students to work independently and check themselves. This topic is part of the Upper Elementary Botany curriculum.

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

### **a. Finance Committee**

- **Review of December Budget to Actual:** Levin shared that there are no unexpected trends in the report.
- **Review of Committee Goals and Priorities:** Levin and Trombley discussed the finance committee update.

The finance committee goals established are as follows:

- **Exploring real estate options:**
  - Review additional costs and projections
  - Explore the process for financing a potential purchase including qualifying for loans and federal funds for real estate. Butterfield reminded the Board that if they apply to the Community Loan Fund, she will not be able to participate in those conversations, as she is the secretary of the Fund's Board.
- **Review salary snapshot to eventually create a step program for teaching staff**
  - This review is about fair pay and retention.
  - Connors will assist with this effort and review with Levin/Wrubleski in the process.
- **Financial Education of Trustees:** Trombley's focal point with this goal is to educate the Board on the school's financial position. He wants to help the board have a better understanding of what the information is showing us, so the Board will be more comfortable as they review requests to make financial decisions. Overall, he stated that the financial position is headed in the right direction, however, needs to be maintained. He and Levin emphasized that Fundraising is still key to the continued strong financial position now and into the future. The culture of giving is an important piece and volunteers, partnerships and donations are critical. Should we decide on buying a building, that decision will greatly impact the finances that we currently have. Levin reminded the Board that the fiscal year begins July 1 and Teacher contracts are distributed right before April vacation.

## **8. Program**

### **a: Kinder Plan for 2020/21 School Year**

Levin provided an overview about the analysis done regarding full-day Kindergarten. The per pupil aid for 2020/21 is \$7188 for K-12 as per the new state budget passed this October. Full day K is not mandatory. The ½ day k per pupil aid is \$5333 per pupil.

A cost projection based on our full K classroom of 24 students at \$7188 per student, comes to \$172,512. The ½ day program at \$5333 per pupil plus after-care (averaged over the course of the last 3 years of KinderCare programming), brings us to \$171,951.00. Currently, of the 24 students, 17 enroll in KinderCare. There will be some associated cost for Kindergarten - they will need to have specials - however, we have ideas how to minimize that financial impact, while still providing a robust program for all students.

**Motion:** Connors moved to approve Full Day Kindergarten beginning in the 2020/21 School Year; Trombley Seconded.

**Vote:** Unanimous.

**9. Next Meeting: Wednesday, February 12, 2020 at 5:45pm**

**10. Adjournment**

**Motion:** Talbot moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:01pm; Trombley seconded.

**Vote:** Unanimous



**Educational Program Director  
Board Report  
January 15, 2020**

**January Professional Development:** To support recommendations suggested by our Montessori Audit, we have organized a day of Montessori philosophy discussion and group brainstorming for implementation on Wednesday, January 15th. Biff Maier from Lexington Montessori and the co-founder of the METTC Montessori training program will facilitate this discussion and guide our staff through the key elements of Montessori education as designated by NCMPS.

**Afterschool Programing:** We have been busy this month with afterschool activities. The McIntyre Ski program began as soon as we returned from December break and continues through the months of the January and February. So far, we have been lucky with cancellations and relatively smooth weather. We also began tryouts for our annual variety show to be held on Friday, January 17th at 6:30. Christine Bisson, our resident Drama club facilitator has taken the lead in facilitation this process with the help of Devon Venne as support. Please join us if you can! Additionally, this month, Colleen Costa is running a board game club. Always a favorite with the upper elementary students!

**Access Testing:** Every January, we begin to prepare for ACCESS testing. This is the state mandated assessment that all English Language Learners must take. This standardized assessment determines if a student is eligible for continued English Language support for the 2018/2019 school year. Students will take this test in the latter part of the month.



Executive Director's Report  
For the January 15, 2020  
MFCS School Board Meeting  
Submitted by Meryl Levin

### Required Reporting

I continued to file monthly reports related to Federal Grant expenditures as required.

### Facility

It is our understanding that our landlord will soon be welcoming a new lessee to 100 WLD. While we have not heard this officially, we understand from another tenant that Catholic Charities will be renting the front area currently housing Making Connection Charter School (MC2). That same tenant has told us that MC2 will be moving to a space downstairs. We are working to get confirmation about these changes.

### MFCS ChildCare Program

Here's a breakdown of all Child Care 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).

**Over the December Break, our AfterCare Coordinator gave her notice.** Since then, we have been working hard to hire a replacement. As you are aware, the job market is very tight these days, so while we've posted widely, we are also reaching out to individuals who may know potential candidates. If you, or someone you know, may have links to applicants for this position (ideally able to work daily from 2:45-6pm based on the school calendar or could be a job share), please let me know ASAP! Thank you!

### Enrollment

On January 2, 2020 our 9<sup>th</sup>(!) Enrollment Lottery kicked off. It will run through March 16<sup>th</sup>. This past week we held our first of 4 Lottery Information Sessions, which included 13 adults and 4 of their children. As you have heard me say, we STRONGLY encourage families applying for the Lottery to attend an Information Session, as our Public Montessori Program is a unique setting. We would like all enrolling families to familiarize themselves with our mission and our setting, before entering the Lottery.

**Please help us spread the word about our 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](mailto: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 shared in detail. There they will find dates of the Information Sessions as well as link to the application. Please also share the info and link on your personal FB pages, and let me know if you'd like to have a few flyers to hang at cafes, bookshops, libraries, etc. near you! Please note, anyone needing a paper copy of the application may stop by the school any day during the Enrollment Period between 8:30-3:15. Our 2020 Lottery Day is scheduled for March 25<sup>th</sup> at 4:15pm. We haven't identified this year's Lottery Official...please speak to me directly if you have any ideas!

### Kinder Plans for 2020/21 School Year

At this month's Board Meeting, we will be discussing plans for our Kindergarten program for the upcoming 2020/21 School Year in light of the state's October budget approval that included full funding for kinder students attending schools and districts that opt to offer Full-Day K.

### Financial

**SpEd:** We have been receiving regular payments from all sending districts with SpEd students for whom we provide services. One of our students has been released from his IEP, and so our current para invoicing with Manchester will be reduced accordingly beginning with January billing. A reminder that our Manchester agreement is scheduled to be revisited each March for next school year.

**Title Funds:** This month we received approval to use Title Funds for another exciting professional development opportunity that will take place on January 15<sup>th</sup>. This day of professional development for our faculty will be focused on the Montessori Philosophy and presented by Biff Maier, a nationally recognized Montessori Educator and Leader. His visit is related to the work we are doing in our "Montessori Audit" (also funded with Title Funds this year). That work is designed to review the school's current program fidelity and level of practice in order to instruct and advise the school's Educational Program Director in the process of programmatic goal setting and Montessori Leadership; a minimum of a 1.5 year process.

Our auditor sent over the draft **FY19 Audit** financial statements just before the New Year. Jeff and I have reviewed them, and we look forward to soon receiving the final documents. 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.

I was recently contact by our banker at the Bank of NH. She informed me that the interest levels of our sweep accounts (School and Foundation) would be reduced going forward from 1.9% to 1.75%, reflecting the national trend.

### Legislative Updates

For the third time, last week the NH Joint Legislative Fiscal Committee rejected the first portion of over \$46 million in **federal grant funds**, which were awarded to the state in August. The charter school issue is once again a very hot issue nationally, as it is here in our state.

### MFCS Community Building & Volunteerism

Last week I met with parent volunteers who are organizing our **Annual Calendar Raffle Fundraiser**. This all-school effort involves the acquisition of 30 raffle items (one for each day of the month of April). We are currently collecting gift certificates from local and national businesses, as well as other services and opportunities that would be appealing to adults and/or children. Here's how sales work: Each child will be sent home with 10 calendars and together with their parents are asked to sell the ten calendars at \$10 each; some students/families sell more than 10. The calendars are also available online. Calendars are sold from late February, through the end of March. Then in April, a winner is selected daily and the winner and prize are announced on our FB page and elsewhere in our communications. We print over 2000 calendars, announce it on our public Facebook Page and also in our weekly newsletter. It's a great way for companies to get in front of scores of potential customers for in exchange for a gift certificate of \$25-\$100 value.

**How can you help?** Did you happen to get a gift certificate during the holiday that you weren't a fan of or feel like you may never use? Are you a direct sales representative and want to donate your services or goods as one of the prizes? Do you have any connections to a restaurant or a fun family place you enjoy going to and would be willing to ask for a donation? Please reach out to me via email, so I can follow up with you directly. Thank you!!!

A reminder: We have confirmed the date of **June 6<sup>th</sup>, 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! Thank you to our own, Donna, for securing our first two sponsors!!!

**Foundation News:**

The **Foundation's 2019 Annual Appeal** has brought in **\$15,131**. This is a GREAT showing and due in large part to our long-time friends and supporters, Chris and Theresa Dolloff who once again wowed me with a wonderfully generous contribution! In total we have 20 donors thus far. 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.

**Are there people you know who have not yet visited Mill Falls and learned about our unique public Montessori Program?** We are in the process of scheduling a series of Montessori Morning Tours and building the potential guest lists for those tours. Keep in mind that the tours help us build our guest list for our **Annual Leadership Breakfast** in the spring. So, if you have friends, neighbors, colleagues, or family members who you feel would be interested and supportive of our work – either to partner, fund, or help advocate – please email me directly so that we can connect with them! Thank you!

The Foundation currently holds **\$395,398.19** in its accounts.

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