



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.

"Of all things love is the most potent."

-Dr. Maria Montessori

MFCS Meeting Minutes for May 13, 2020

Public Meeting held remotely as per emergency provisions during COVID-19 State of Emergency

1. Call to Order, Roll Call

Butterfield called the meeting to order at 5:45 PM and shared an explanation of the emergency provisions for a remote meeting during COVID-19 State of Emergency.

A roll call was conducted for attendance remotely. **Present:** Bee, Butterfield, Connors (arrived at 5:51PM) Corriveau, Depasse, Johnson, Levin, Marr, Talbot, Trombley, and Wrubleski; **Absent:** Talbot.

2. Announcements/Updates

Levin announced that she received the approved Manchester School District calendar. The calendar is different than it has been, and first day of school is September 2, 2020 and the last scheduled day is June 16, 2020. Wrubleski and Levin will need to rethink our calendar in relation to the Manchester School District's calendar so as to keep the differences to a minimum, and thereby limited the potential for extra bussing charges. Levin will call a quick meeting with the Board to propose and approve the 2020-2021 school calendar. Levin also stated she expects the main topic for the June Board meeting will be the school's efforts to reopen in the fall, as there is not enough information at this time to discuss the options – the state has not put forth its guidelines.

3. Public Comment: No public present on the call, nor emails from public received during remote session

4. Meeting Business

a. Approval of Minutes from April 2020 meeting

Motion: Trombley moved to approve the April 2020 meeting minutes; Marr Seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Unanimous.

5. Montessori Moment: Educational Program Director Update on Remote Learning by Laura Wrubleski

Wrubleski presented the update on remote learning. The academic structure took a little time to roll-out. She reviewed the weekly options for work completion that were made available in various subject areas, dependent on the program level in academic areas of math, language, cultural, handwriting, spelling, reading, writing, and work of the home. Assignments for all students, including recorded lessons by the teachers, were shared with students in Google classroom. We used Google Classroom differently for our younger students who generally worked from a grid organized by curricular area, while the Upper Elementary. Students worked more interactively with the platform.

Daily live classroom meetings were hosted (via Zoom) where students gathered as a large group to discuss various topics. There were also daily social chats where the students (primarily upper), had the opportunity to join a live session (again via Zoom) to chat with friends or play games – important social time.

The majority of the new lessons are pre-recorded for ease of viewing and so that they can be accessed at each student's own pace. The pre-recorded lessons focused on math, spelling, writing, and cultural. Live lessons were reserved for reading instruction only.

Wrubleski discussed the “Big Work” expectation that has been integrated into this Remote Learning Period. This is a Montessori practice, designed to enable students to find a topic that sparks interest or passion and allows for the chance for a dive deep. These self-directed projects can result in hands on work, visual displays or an actual celebration. This has been an engaging way to get students excited about their learning. There has been varying levels of participation.

Wrubleski discussed the progress reports for this third and final trimester of the year. Each teacher will write an individual narrative commenting on the student participation in the live meetings and instruction, as well as the completion of assigned work. Due to the abrupt onset of this method of school during the pandemic, this approach is an appropriate means of reporting on student progress at this point, especially knowing that some students had more support at home than others.

The final day of school will be June 5th. The final week will have some fun projects and celebrations!

In response to the Board’s inquiry about whether she has seen a drop in the level of engagement, Wrubleski said she felt that attendance looked good but that the work output has shifted slightly. She shared, that it’s hard to tell if the students are tired of the rigor of remote learning or if the parents are just unable to sustain the support. If remote learning were to be part of the fall return to school, Wrubleski is comfortable setting up very clear expectations, now that structure has been put around the remote learning during the school closure for the pandemic.

6. School Update

b. Executive Director – Meryl Levin

Levin shared with the Board that she attended a webinar earlier that day about the reopening schools hosted by our school’s insurer. Nationally, educators and advisors are feeling the road to reopening and planning for next year as daunting. It includes considerations on everything from the facility, technology, PPE, space needs, safety policy and procedures, additional supports/staff needs and transportation issues. In addition, the consideration of funding, such as Title funds, CARE funds, and other dollars to support technology purchases and other COVID-19 related needs. It is still unclear exactly what funds we might get to help support these needs and cover expenses required for reopening. Levin stated that she may consider teaming up to collaborate with another charter school that is very thoughtful in their approach if that makes sense as she learns more about what is needed.

Levin spoke of how amazing the staff has been throughout this challenging period of remote learning. She acknowledged that every time there was a pivot, a technology need, or a resource need, the staff was right there to support and execute.

The last day of school for teaching staff and students is June 5th. She shared that they have already begun the process of closing down the school for the year. There is a plan for cleaning out classrooms and for families to pickup personal belongings that were left behind when the school closed so suddenly as well as year end academic items. Overall, continued curricular adjustments, a big look at next year and closing down the school is the focus right now. Understanding the needs for next year, safety requirements, and the data analysis to achieve it will be key.

In appreciation of the staff’s great work, Levin organized a few virtual events with the team, like a yoga and art classes.

Each person on staff was presented with an academic excellence award tied to teacher appreciation week funded by the Foundation an initiative taken by the Foundation Board and MUCH appreciated by staff..

Finally, Levin discussed the plan for the end of the year celebration. She has the pleasure of working with a Derryfield Senior student, whose senior project is to work with Mill Falls Charter School on this end of year event. Levin is working with the student to create a series of videos, which will be sewn together, representing all typical end of year events rolled up into one event. We were not able to host several fundraising events, that typically raise approximately \$65,000, in addition to lost revenue from the child care

income. Levin is hopeful that the event will also raise some funds – tickets are free, but donations will be requested and there will be sponsorship.

Levin shared that she will be participating in the state’s task force for school reopening. As she understands it, there will be a series of public meetings and work done by 6 or 7 working groups. All of the information will be woven together with a goal of presenting guidelines for school leaders, superintendents and the Governor. This is slated to be completed by the end of June. Levin reminded the Board that it is difficult to know when/if the next wave of Covid19 will come and that there are many variables that need to be considered and schools should be positioned for plan A and plan B for the coming year.

Levin shared with the group that it was lovely welcoming the new kindergarten families in a remote Parent Orientation held earlier in the week. She was pleased we had 100% attendance at this required event. The next events include 2 remote Step Up nights for parents/guardians of students moving from one program level to the next (Kinder to Lower EI or Lower EI to Upper EI). Both of these events will be Zoom events and will provide an overview of the programming.

Connors asked Levin if it will be necessary for Levin and Wrubleski to work in July, when they normally are off. The Board agreed to keep this on the radar and this subject should be added to the June meeting agenda for further discussion.

7. Officer/Foundation/Committee/Working Group & Related Q+A
a. Finance Committee - Budget Discussion

Motion: Trombley moved to go into a non-public session, Connors Seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Unanimous.

The Board discussed matters of the budget in the non-public session. The next steps will be for the Finance Committee to bring forward a sound budget for consideration to the June meeting.

Motion: Trombley moved to come out of the non-public session, Connors Seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Unanimous.

8. Approval of 2020/21 Calendar

Levin will organize a meeting of the Board to review and hopefully approve the proposed 2020/21 School Calendar.

9. Next Monthly Meeting: Wednesday, June 10, 2020 at 5:45pm

10. Adjournment

Motion: Trombley moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 pm; Connors Seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Unanimous.



Educational Program Director Board Report For the May 13, 2020 Meeting

Remote Learning Programing: On March 16th, as a community, we began remote learning. After 8 complete weeks we have implemented the following:

- Weekly, new options for work completion are made available in the various subject areas depending on level: math, language, cultural, handwriting, spelling, reading, writing, and work of the home. Works choices are found in Google Classroom and turned into teachers through this online platform.
- Daily live classroom meetings- This is a typical meeting time for students to gather as a large group, discuss routine topics such as the calendar, sing songs, or play games. Students may also share personal topics or items.
- Daily social chats: Students have the opportunity to join a live session via zoom to chat with friends or to play a game.
- The majority of our NEW lessons are pre-rerecorded so as to allow for ease of viewing. Pre-recorded lessons have focused on math, spelling, writing, and cultural.
- Live lessons have been reserved for new reading instruction only. We felt this area of the curriculum would require this style of contact for the best retention.

Events to Support Remote Learning: We have been mindful of what types of events still need to occur to ensure social-emotional stability. Step Up for students transitioning at the kindergarten level and the 3rd grade is important for giving a glimpse of the upcoming year and learning expectations of the next level. We have orchestrated an opportunity for students to attend a classroom meeting with each of the next level classrooms as well as created a slide show of the classrooms and possible works they will be working on in the upcoming year. Parents will have the opportunity to meet the teachers via Zoom in a Step Up Night, planned for May 20th. They too will see this slide show and hear in detail information regarding curriculum, and differences in expectations between levels. Additionally, we have planned a series of celebratory events to close out the year as referenced in Meryl's report.

Progress Reports: Progress reports in the remote style of instruction are a challenging endeavor to accomplish due to the limited ability to assess, and variable student participation. Therefore, as a school, we have decided to create a participation report for each student. Each teacher will be writing an individual narrative commenting on student participation in live meetings and instruction as well as work completion, specifically addressing March 16th through June 6th. Given the abrupt onset of this method of schooling, this approach is an appropriate reporting of student progress at this point.

NCMPS Work: I continue to meet with Elizabeth Slade on a weekly basis. These meetings have been instrumental in making connections around the country/world, hearing about potential methods and strategies that support remote learning, and developing curriculum maps that are manageable, if and when this model should need to occur again. Additionally, Elizabeth has acted as my personal mentor giving guidance in an administrator role, so as to support our staff directly. Her support could not have come at a better time than during a pandemic.



**Executive Director's Report
For the May 13, 2020
MFCS School Board Meeting
Submitted by Meryl Levin**

Report Note: Beginning on March 16th, we started our first ever Remote Learning Period due to COVID-19. This health emergency required that we close the school building, but continue to operate our school. Essentially, we have created a parallel school to our bricks and mortar/face-to-face learning model. This emergency has redefined priorities and day-to-day functions of all staff including our admin team. We have all worked remotely since March 17th, and communicated regularly via Zoom, email, text, telephone, and as infrequently as possible, in person following social distancing. This has been an extraordinary time, full of challenges at every turn.

Required Reporting

We have completed and filed our **Middle of the Year Report (MOY)**, which is quite similar to the BOY (Beginning of the Year) and EOY (End of the Year). We will soon be required to complete the End of Year (EOY) report (though the state has extended the reporting window due to COVID-19).

Facility

Over the last several weekends, I created a schedule for **staff to access the building**, taking care not to have more than 1 person there at a time. They needed to access Montessori materials and other items as they worked to provide their remote instruction. I have now created a revised schedule for staff to follow for the **close down of the building for this school year**. Classrooms and common spaces are now being cleaned out with inventory taken, and all shelves/furniture moved so that the carpets can be cleaned. We have also scheduled a day for contact-free retrieval by families of all items left at school – June 1. All staff must complete their end of year clean up, as per Laura's instructions by June 5.

Our landlord has proceeded with his construction project in the space beside our school, since mid-March, using our entry lobby as the main thoroughfare for construction and demolition materials. I have been told by the facilities manager that route is no longer needed, and that the area may now be cleaned. I have asked that the parking lot be cleaned of construction debris. I will schedule a time with the building manager for the hole in our wall and other damage created during construction to be repaired. I also understand that MC2 has moved to their new space in the rear of the building. I do not know when the new tenant, Catholic Charities, will move in.

MFCS ChildCare Program

Our ChildCare Program was suspended beginning March 16th with the onset of our Remote Learning Period. With the Governor's plan not to allow schools to reopen for face-to-face learning, our ChildCare Program was canceled for the rest of the school year. As you are aware, this has had a significant financial cost for the organization, as our ChildCare Program is one of the income areas that helps offset our annual deficit. A few families generously donated their ChildCare fees to the school.

A reminder that next year will only have Before and AfterCare, as we will have full-day Kinder.

Enrollment

Following the Remote Lottery 2020, which went extremely smoothly, we embarked on the process of **welcoming our new Kinder Families**, and attempting to determine who on our currently enrolled student **watch list** will actually not be returning next year. This is always a

difficult process, as many families choose to hold on to their Mill Falls spot, despite having different plans for their child for the coming year. We have been in contact with the families on our watch list and continue to hear about those who will not be returning. It is important to know who will be with us at the start of the year, both for the placement work that staff will do next week, but also for enrollment planning. We hope to end the year with a full 168 student count for next year, though we recognize that we will likely have a few spots to fill in late summer, as usual, because of late-breaking decisions by a few families.

The COVID-19 emergency made it impossible for us to schedule our usual required Kinder Interview Day. Instead, we built another required event so that we could meet our new Kinder Families. This week we held our first ever **Remote Kindergarten Orientation**, which was extremely successful. All members of the Admin Team joined forces with our Kinder Lead and Assistant Teachers to introduce ourselves and our Kinder Program. Ms. Kristin, the Lead Teacher, led a virtual classroom tour, and we all answered questions 'asked' via the Zoom chat. ALL of our new Kinder families joined us for the hour-long event!

Financial

SpEd: We have been receiving regular reimbursement payments from all sending districts with SpEd students for whom we provide services. The annual agreement with Manchester was signed in early April for the coming school year.

Title Funds: Laura is continuing her work with Elizabeth Slade of NCMPS. However, with the pivot to Remote Learning, their work together has largely been about supporting our Montessori Educators, Students and Families, during this very challenging period. A reminder that work is covered by Title Funds, as per our previously approved title grant usage.

Billing/Banking: While working remotely I have continued to pay all bills and make banking deposits. Once the school year is complete – June 5th is the final day for most staff and students – I will make arrangements with our bookkeeper to update our QuickBooks file accordingly.

PPP Loan: I filed for and received a PPP loan. As most of you are aware, the Payroll Protection Program based on 2.5 months of payroll cost. 80% can be used for payroll, and 25% for lease, utilities and benefits.

School Calendar

Last meeting, we approved the revised calendar for this school year. June 5th will be the final day for students and for most staff. The Admin Team will work a bit longer to close out the year and begin planning for next.

We are still awaiting the approval of the Manchester School District's **2020/21 School Calendar**, so that we can create ours. It is expected that MSD will complete that in the next weeks. I've been in touch with the District Offices and look forward to using that to create our 2020/21 School Calendar. A reminder, we must link to theirs closely given our busing agreement with the District.

Legislative Updates

As you are likely aware, the legislature has not been meeting during COVID-19. So, there are no updates to offer as of now.

MFCS Community Building & Volunteerism

The springtime is a key fundraising period for Mill Falls. It is also a time of MANY community and school events. It has been extremely difficult and emotional for all of us to let go of the many events and activities that normally happen between March and June. From Grandparents Day to Spirit Week; Spring Book Fair to Step Up Days for our students moving into new Program Levels; our Annual Leadership Breakfast (usually a \$35,000-\$40,000 morning of fundraising) to our Annual Calendar Raffle (usually a \$10,000 fundraiser); our Night of Community end of the year adult celebration and largely parent-based fundraiser (brings in about \$12,000) to Field Day and our

Student Teacher Soccer Game; from our 6th Year Overnight to our Kinder Tea to our 6th Year Graduation and SO MUCH MORE!

However, you know us to be creative, resourceful, and tenacious, so we looked carefully at the calendar and salvaged what we could, and reconceived some things to try to still bring joy and community to our spring. We have scheduled the following:

- Our **Annual Calendar Raffle Fundraiser** was supposed to be March sales with April prizes...then came COVID. We changed the deadline and decided that June (also a 30 day month) would be the new Prize Month. Sales have been painfully slow, and we may only clear \$1500-\$2000 (usually it brings in \$10K). We will close sales on May 25th and will announce winners daily in June. If you'd like to purchase any calendars, you can do here: <https://millfalls.org/spring-calendar-raffle/>.
- **Student Step Up Days** will be folded into Classroom Morning Meetings via Zoom.
- **Parent Step Up Night** will be a virtual event via Zoom, similar to the Kinder event described above.
- This coming week we will be creating an **online Art Gallery** (the link will be shared in the newsletter).
- The largest project is our **Montessori Morning Tea: a Virtual Celebration of Learning**. This event, scheduled for **Thursday, June 4th at 10am**. It is sort of a mash up of our Annual Leadership Breakfast, our Kinder Tea, our 6th Year Graduation and our In-school Step Up Celebration. I have been gifted the talents and time of a graduating Derryfield Senior who has made this her required senior project. She is a gem, and together we are orchestrating the event's components, all of which will be pre-recorded. It is our hope that we will be able to secure a few sponsors and there will be modest ticket price as well. There will be humor, hope, joy and song. It is my every hope that you will be able to join us!
- As for our **6th Year Graduates**, we are working hard on a few other surprises for them to be sure they feel recognized, and to give all of us the chance to wish them well as they step out.

A few weeks ago, I wrote to the Commissioner of Education, asking that he create a DOE Task Force focused on schools and COVID and reopening plans. Earlier this week he called me to confirm that I would serve on the **Task Force for School Transitioning** that he has now created.

Foundation News:

This week, the Foundation shared incredible kindness: In recognition of our staff's phenomenal work during this extraordinary time of remote learning, and timed with Teacher Appreciation Week, the Foundation provided a one-time Academic Excellence payment to each staff member. Needless to say, everyone was extremely appreciative of this surprise recognition!

The Foundation currently holds **\$391,725.63** in its accounts.

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