



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 August 13, 2020

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

1. Call to Order, Roll Call & Welcome Public

Call to Order: Butterfield called the meeting to order at 6 pm under Gov Exec order #12; the Board met remotely - no members physically present. Public was advised to contact MFCS Project Manager, Grace Eaton; for access. Eaton monitored the waiting room during the meeting and was present as IT/Admin support. No public attended.

Roll call was conducted for attendance.

Present: Bee, Butterfield, Corriveau, DePasse, Johnson, Levin, Talbot, Trombley, and Wrubleski;

Absent: Connors.

2. Meeting Business

a. Approval of Minutes from July 15, 2020 meeting

Levin noted that the minutes would be amended to note that Bashier and H. Marr were invited guests, as part of their nomination process.

Motion: Trombley moved to approve the July 15, 2020 minutes. DePasse seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Unanimous.

3. Governance Committee's Nomination & Expected Vote: Hind Bashier & Heather Marr

Butterfield noted that the Governance Committee met virtually with Bashier and Marr as part of our nomination process after July Board Meeting. Both nominees and the Governance Committee feel it is a great match. She noted that Peter Marr has shared that he has stepped down after many years of service on the Board.

Motion: Butterfield moved to nominate Hind Bashar and Heather Marr to the Board of Trustees; Talbot seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Unanimous

Following the vote, Hind Bashir & Heather Marr joined the meeting as Trustees.

6: Update on Misc. COVID-related Items

MFCS COVID-related Calendar Changes

Levin reviewed the proposed COVID-revised school calendar. The three additional professional development days allowed by the Governor this school year, and designed not to impact the instructional day count, were added to the start of the year (a match to Manchester's use of the extra 3 days). Additionally, she noted the proposal to start school on September 9th, also a match to Manchester.

Motion: Corriveau moved to approve the school calendar as proposed; Talbot seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Unanimous

Levin will share the approved revised calendar with the school community.

Computer Purchase Update

Levin advised that the Chromebooks were proactively ordered some time ago (June), however, regrettably 46 of the 145 have not yet arrived. She is in regular contact with the vendor – this is a world-wide shortage.

Manchester Busing Update

Levin shared that there is no firm busing update yet. A busing meeting has been called for next week which is quite late in the planning process. Manchester talked about creating a busing hub model at various sites

across the city, as well as the coordination of bell times schedules among charter schools and the district schools, but has not provided any significant details to date. Levin and Corriveau discussed some legislation regarding these possible models and concerns of busing. Levin will update the group as more information unfolds.

7. Review of DRAFT Plan

A: Additional Details on Hybrid Model in light of Manchester's Plan

Levin shared that Manchester's approved restart plan is quite different from what they had proposed in their earlier school board meetings. Manchester students in grades 2-12 will be learning remotely; Pre-K through 1st grade, as well as some special targeted student groups, will be learning in a hybrid model. The Manchester School Board approved this plan at their meeting on August 10th, 2020.

In response, and after very serious consideration of the options in light of the busing agreement Mill Falls has with the Manchester District as per charter law, the Mill Falls Team made adjustments to it's plan for School Restart. The Team proposes to offer Hybrid and Remote, but for the first term, the Hybrid model would only be available to kinder and 1st year students.

Levin emphasized that at this late date, with no busing plan in place the Team was deeply challenged in making this decision. They reviewed the surveys that reflected stated busing needs by Mill Falls Parents. Usually, 80+ students ride the buses; and while fewer might utilize it this year, there are still a significant number of students/families who would need busing. Nearly all of those students were in grades 2-6. Further, being that school is set to begin in just a few weeks, the Admin team determined that it was critical to problem solve and pivot and solidify the Re-Opening plan for staff AND for families.

Wrubleski and Levin shared that the revised proposed plan has Kindergarteners in 2 cohorts, which each cohort in school 2 days per week and everyone at home learning on Big Work Wednesdays). Because our 1st year students can be spread out over 3 Lower Elementary classrooms, we could have all 24 students (if they selected) to be in school 4 days per week everyone at home learning on Big Work Wednesdays. Wrubleski added that our youngest students will benefit greatly from in-person learning time in relation to learning to read and gaining number sense that is so critical for their development. And we have plenty of space to enable the safe physical distancing protocols for these students, with this plan. Levin noted that families of our K and 1st Year students will be asked to confirm their child's learning plan if the Board approves the proposal.

Wrubleski explained that the staff was very reticent of letting go of the Hybrid model for all 2-6 year students. But she and Levin both highlighted the need to set up a system that would provide for equitable access to education. Given the busing relationship with Manchester and the understanding in the past that Manchester charged the school when Mill Falls' busing needs didn't match Manchester's plan. Without clarity from Manchester at this late date, the Team felt it was necessary to create a plan that would align.

Wrubelski noted that teachers will have hybrid, hybrid remote, and remote students. That is a significant workload for them, and will require strong teamwork and sharing of responsibilities. Staff Opening Days will include well rounded support for all these instruction models.

Questions:

Talbot asked about how we will support special needs students. Wrubleski stated that we will be supporting the students with services, as written by the IEP. Special Education services will be a priority and will continue based on the IEPs, unless additional guidance is shared, as was last spring. Levin reminded the Board that we are an inclusive setting for our Special Education students, and we do not segregate them. Wrubleski noted that we are in the process of meeting and evaluating student IEP's, as mandated by the state, and we will be discussing the IEP needs at these meetings during the month of September, as will be happening for Special Education students across the state.

DePasse asked about the decision to only offer an in-person setting to K and 1. Levin stated that of 168 students, about 80 students take the bus to school. Based on family surveys, we have 26 students that said

they had to take the bus. Manchester has not said what they are planning, but the law essentially states that they are only required to provide busing as they do for their students – which strongly suggests that it could be only for K/1. Many unknowns at this time. Wrubleski and Levin stressed that having equitable access to education is essential for all our students. There were only 2-3 students in the K/1 group that said they had to have busing. They hope to work with those families. Corriveau advised that Manchester will be meeting in 3 weeks and all of this could change again. The Manchester School Board agreed that they will be evaluating their program offers every 3 weeks. He noted that they did commit to the first quarter for the hybrid Pre-K through 1st grade model.

Corriveau asked Wrubleski if she is comfortable with this being the model until mid-November. Wrubleski stated that she is, and that a great deal of consideration has gone into the planning of this plan.

Levin/Wrubleski reviewed the In-Person Hybrid Schedule (also noted in School Re-Start Plan)

Kindergarten - Monday/Thursday & Tuesday Friday (2 cohorts)

First Year Students – Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday – 4 days per week hybrid model

All students home on Wednesdays for Big Works Day.

B: Overview & Vote: Mill Falls' School Re-Start Plan: discussion, corrections, additions

Levin ran through the draft School Re-Start Plan, highlighted all revisions made for the Board's final approval including: Starting the Year with just K/1st Years in Hybrid; Additional note about diversity when creating cohorts; added restrictions to the types of facial coverings following the recent study; additional information about cleaning process; adjustment to our start date; note that ChildCare Program on hold until further notice.

Bee asked if there is a need to provide masks to families. Levin shared that Mill Falls has added masks to the back-to-school list for hybrid learners and noted that the school has some disposable masks on hand at which was received from the state. Bee offered to assist as needed with access to cloth masks to add to the supply for the school.

Talbot asked about attendance expectations. Levin explained that this is documented in the Re-Start Plan, and that the expectation is that if a student is quarantined (due to travel or potential exposure) but feeling well, there is an expectation for them to attend remotely.

DePasse acknowledged the Admin Team, thanking them for their extreme effort. Butterfield echoed this appreciation to the team and their ability to pivot and adjust as needed. Trombley stated that there was a lot of energy put into the equitable and thoughtful plan.

Motion: Depasse moved to approve the Mill Falls School Re-Start Plan as amended; Trombley seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Unanimous.

8. Next Meeting: Possible Late August Meeting - to be determined

10. Adjournment

Motion: Trombley moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:46 pm; DePasse seconded the motion

Roll Call Vote: Unanimous