



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 Board Meeting Minutes for February 17, 2021 @ 5:45pm

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

1. **Call to Order:** Connors called the meeting to order at 5:50pm under Gov Exec #12; the Board met remotely - no members physically present. For Meeting access, public was instructed to contact office@millfalls.org. There were no members of the public who requested access before or during the meeting.

Role Call: Present: Connors, Butterfield, DePasse, Talbott, Marr, Bashir, Corriveau, Levin, Wrubleski

Absent: Trombley, Johnson, Bee

2. Meeting Business

a. **Approval of Minutes** from January 20, 2021 meetings

Motion: Butterfield moved to approve the minutes; Connors seconded.

Vote: Approved unanimously with Talbott & Corriveau abstaining from vote due to absence from previous meeting.

3. School Reporting

Educational Program Director: Wrubleski shared that Assessments in reading, writing and math are now complete; all Kinder assessments were done in person. It was great to have the Kindergarteners in the building and with their teachers in person. The rest of students did assessments remotely. Having now reviewed the assessment results, we know that most of our students have made growth and have not regressed, which is great news to be able to share. There is a low number of students that have regressed. All of this is impressive considering the situation over the last year. Some students are, however, losing interest in school as time goes and they are in remote.

Last Tuesday evening we held our Virtual Parent Information Session about the 3rd and final Trimester Teaching and Learning Models - Hybrid and Dedicated Remote Teaching Models. Approximately 60 families joined us. We also sent out the slides from the presentation for those that could not attend. The following morning, we sent families the Hybrid or Remote Learning Selection Form, a required and binding form. About 90% chose Hybrid, leaving just 10% in Remote. We are really happy about the small number who will remain remote as we are so eager to have the kids back in the building. Families that chose remote were contacted to discuss their reasons for selecting this model, and if possible, see if we could work together to make hybrid work for them. We are still working on hiring; we haven't solidified the remote teaching teams yet. Student cohort building was the majority of our focus the last week. It was a brain-bending process to get everyone situated. We had to consider special education needs and siblings and our multi-age classrooms. We will use the two weeks after break to finalize any structures and we'll open up with these two new/refined models on March 15th.

Executive Director Levin shared that she called the majority of the families that requested remote and was really pleased with how many people changed their selection after those conversations which provided a great way to really connect with our families. Our Staff Planning Committee has already met several times to help identify and solve questions and concerns. Laura and the admin team are working hard as well to finalize protocol and systems. There is a tremendous number of logistical complications and puzzle pieces that must be put together to prepare for the 15th.

For our increased staffing needs for Trimester 3, we hope to access some of the COVID federal funds, and there is money in the Foundation if necessary. Hiring has been very difficult. We have been promoting the positions available all over the country, advertising in our usual and some new spots. Levin asked Trustees to share any leads for the Upper Elementary Remote positions with her and Wrubleski directly. She reminded them it is a three-month position, starting on or about March 1st.

Levin added that staff and parents/guardians have expressed great enthusiasm about the kids coming back into the building, and the kids are super excited. Communication will be sent out this week, thanking everyone for being open to being in person and taking precautions and staying healthy and staying safe as we reopen our doors. We will share the cohort placement with families on March 2nd. On the NH-DOE, NH Health and Human Services, and CDC calls Levin sat in on this week, it is clear that people at those agencies are hoping to see the schools reopening. Levin said our staff feels that we are on the right timeline, and noted that Mill Falls will remain diligent in screening and wellness to minimize COVID risk.

She also mentioned that she is looking for a 2021 Lottery Official for this year's Lottery Day on March 15th.

Review of Budget to Actual: Levin noted there are no unexpected trends in the budget. She added that in some areas of the budget we have not spent what we have budgeted because they relate to in-person learning, but in other areas we of course are way over due to COVID. She is continuing to work with the federal funds we have received so far and understands there is another round coming up.

Finally, Levin invited the Board to click on the links in Laura's Corner in our weekly newsletter, especially if you have any young readers in their life – as that was the subject of the most recent Tea with Laura and related videos by our Reading Interventionist, Sherry Humphrey.

Connors asked about having N95 masks available at school. Levin reminded her that there is no nurse to fit the staff in the masks for wide use, but she did note that we have those on hand for the front office when they are caring for ill students. She also mentioned that it will be strongly recommended that the staff wear multi-layered masks or masks, given the spread of the variants and the fact that teachers will not be able to get vaccinated until the spring, unfortunately.

The Board also discussed how various schools and districts are handling situations where individual students in the hybrid learning model must quarantine after travel. Wrubleski noted that our remote students will not be able to flip over to remote and then back to hybrid classroom. Connors noted that in her district the long quarantine time due to household

exposure has posed significant challenges. At her school, students in quarantine do not receive live lessons and receive their work through Google Classroom.

6: Additional Updates on Misc. COVID-related Items

- **Current COVID Situational Awareness:** Levin noted that the state COVID case numbers are looking much better, in sync with national numbers. She noted she will continue to watch the local Manchester numbers in the state reporting. The NH HHS expects Vaccine Phase 1b to be completed by end of March. Teachers are in Vaccine Phase 2a and that should start soon after. Connors thanked level Levin for always looking at the local level numbers – an important reference point for risk during in-person learning.
- **Future Expanded Hybrid Learning Plan Update:** Levin noted that Manchester is still only offering the hub model for busing. These hubs are not at schools, but are 4 large parking lots around the city with no adult/staff supervision. The Board reviewed the basics of charter school busing law, and discussed what next year might look like. It was agreed that Levin would contact the school's legal counsel for next steps.

7. Next Meeting: Wednesday, March 17th, 2021.

Connors will send email with Committee meeting schedule,

8. Adjournment: Butterfield motioned to adjourn; DePasse seconded. Unanimous vote to adjourn.



Executive Director Report
February 17, 2021
Submitted by Meryl Levin

Required Reporting

Since our last meeting, we filed our required Feb 1st per-pupil report via the DOE's new reporting method that utilized the AOY (Anytime of Year) digital reporting tool. You may recall that we are required to report our enrollment 4 times per year and receive per-pupil aid from the DOE based on that reporting.

Board Related

A reminder from Jill and I that Board members should plan meeting times to set **Committee Goals & Planned Actions** for the year. These goals ought then to be shared with the full Board in the coming months.

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**. Perhaps you have a lead to any sources of gently used/still in very good shape wall mount cabinets that can be repurposed for use here, please speak to me directly.

Hybrid Learning Update

As you are aware from various school communications which you have received, we plan to **reopen to in-person (hybrid) learning and shift our remote students to dedicated remote teachers beginning March 15th**. This is the first day of our 3rd trimester of this school year. Last week we held our parent/guardian information session and followed that up with a required and binding form for to complete by Tuesday, February 16th, declaring which learning model – hybrid or remote – they will enroll their children in for this final trimester. We have heard back from most of our families and as of this writing, just over 10% has selected remote, the rest have selected hybrid. We expect to hear from our have contact with all families by midday Tuesday. Laura will then embark on working with staff to create the am/pm cohorts.

Alongside that, we have been working tirelessly to **hire additional staff** to fill out the needs these two models present.

Further, we have a **committee of staff** working weekly on questions and issues that need to be addressed and resolved in advance of our re-opening. Some of the finer points will be determined by the Admin Team, and others at the Collab Meetings of each level (K, Lower EI and Upper EI) which are led by Laura.

Facility

As we **prepare to welcome students back to in-person learning**, we are reviewing our facility to be sure that our signage, resources and other tools are in good shape and well stocked. Between now and March 15th, staff is continuing to work in a hybrid fashion, coming to school at least one day per week (in-between snowstorms), and additionally as needed/preferred, and working remotely the other days. They are required to complete wellness checks before entering the building, and once in the building to observe all established COVID safety protocol (i.e.: masking and distancing, hand hygiene). Our safety precautions also include observing quarantine and isolation requirements based on exposure, travel or positive COVID diagnosis. When the Office Manager is working remotely, she takes calls through a call-forwarding system. As noted in earlier reports, access to the building is still restricted to staff, approved service providers or emergency personnel only.

Teaching staff is utilizing our **Weekend Material Distribution Plan** (materials left outside in plastic bins, organized by classroom) for sharing materials with their students.

Enrollment

Thus far we have hosted 3 of our 4 scheduled **Virtual Lottery Information Sessions** for this lottery season. The sessions, held via Zoom, have been fairly well attended. To date we have just over 110 applicants; this is lower than our usual lottery enrollment and something that charters across the state are also experiencing. As noted in previous reports, in a typical year, we receive anywhere between 175-250+.

Our 2021 Lottery Day is scheduled for March 15th at 4:15pm. This will be held remotely, as we did in 2020. **If you have any suggestions of potential Lottery Officials** (we need one person, not connected to Mill Falls to participate), please let me know directly and as soon as possible!

As we approach the last few weeks of our Lottery Enrollment Period, please continue **spread the word** about our Lottery Enrollment Period (Jan 4- March 8th). Please direct people to our website that has all the info about our Lottery and our program: www.millfalls.org/enroll. You can also share it in your social media outlets. Thank you!

Please encourage friends, neighbors and colleagues with young children to consider applying to Mill Falls. The website also hosts the Lottery Enrollment Application.

During this odd year, we have had a few more unenrollment's than usual. That said, our Project Manager, Grace Eaton, has done a great job of working to keep our student body full at 168 students. With the announcement of our next phase of Teaching & Learning during COVID, we have had 2 families (as of this writing) decide to unenroll their children – totaling 3 open spots.

MFCS ChildCare Program

Due to the COVID pandemic, this program is on hold until further notice.

Financial

The Field Work for our **FY20 Audit** was handled remotely due to COVID and is now complete. Hard copies of the audit materials are available to Board members for review and the audit will be sent to the DOE as required, and posted on our website, as is our annual practice. A reminder that as part of our annual audit the same firm does the 990 for the MFCS Foundation.

Just after we welcome back our students to in-person learning and complete the lottery on March 15th, I will shift my focus to the preparation of the **FY22 Budget**. By that time, we should have some more information regarding this next phase of federal support that will be available into next year. As usual, staff contracts will be offered just before April Vacation.

Special Education: The flow of payment of Special Education invoices for services has been timely from all districts we are working with. Following the addition of some students to our Special Education Program as per their IEPs, we have two new districts we are working with.

Title Funds: We continue our regular flow of expense reimbursement in relation to various title funding grants for Title I (support for our students needing intervention), Title II (staff professional development); Title III (support for our English Language Learners); Title IV a flexible area of funding for student and staff support.

Additional Federal Funding to Support Us During COVID: I look forward to learning more from our state's Department of Education about the newest round of funding. They informed us that they are awaiting more information and will share what they know, as soon as they have information.

COVID/Health Related

I continue to attend weekly COVID-related meetings held by the state's Department of Human Services and led by Dr. Chan, our state's epidemiologist. With the new administration in Washington, we have heard a lot about new guidelines for school re-opening that were

introduced late last week. NH remains one of the few states not prioritizing teachers for access to vaccine, which is upsetting to me, and our staff. While our state numbers are on a great downward trend, even the CDC recommendations guide us to keep an eye on the community numbers. However, the state of NH (HHS, DOE and Governor) has been clear that they expect school should be open to in-person learning, regardless of the level of community infection, as long as there are not clusters of spread in schools. I'm working to understand it all – there continue to be a lot of moving parts. There is an upcoming CDC webinar later this week which I will attend. Additionally, I continue to seek information and wisdom from the Manchester Health Department and other contacts in the medical and public health fields. I share what I learn in that weekly state call with our Admin Team and also relevant portions in our weekly newsletter for our larger school community.

MFCS Community Building & Volunteerism

We held our 2nd **Tea with Laura, on January 29th**. The focus of this Tea was supporting emerging readers. In addition to what Laura shared, we provided links to 2 videos created by our Reading Interventionist, Sherry Humphrey – one about sight words and one about phonetic awareness.

These Teas are designed to provide a regularly scheduled opportunity for parents/guardians/caregivers to explore topics with Laura that are impacting their children. Info about the Teas are in our newsletter, we'd love to have you join us if you can! Stay tuned for information about our next one (not yet scheduled).

Beginning last Thursday, a Mill Falls alumna and big sister to two of our current students, kicked off a **virtual art club**. She is working with about 10 of students in our Upper Elementary Program. Stay tuned for some creations! Even in this odd year, we are working on a few other fun afterschool offerings including a **sing-along** for kinders with Mr. Eli and a coding club with the high school-aged daughter of Ms. Sue, one of our Special Educators

We continue to engage a few families – parents and grandparents – for their help in assembling our first set of **Montessori Home Kits** which include paper versions of some Montessori materials and are being going home to our students for them to practice with as part of their follow up work.

I hope you continue to enjoy the photographs in our **newsletter** that are sent in by our families and captured on screens in an effort to share the good and creative work being done by our students and staff during this Remote Learning Period.

Human Resources

As noted above, we are reaching out to many sources in our search for remote teacher(s) and additional paraprofessionals as we prepare for the next phase of learning in COVID. **If you have any leads or would like information to share with your social networks, PLEASE contact me directly!**

Foundation News:

The Foundation currently holds \$438,313.87 in its accounts.

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