



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 Agenda for April 21, 2021 @ 5:45pm

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

1. **Call to Order, Roll Call & Welcome Public** (Talbot, filling in for 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.

Present: Talbot, Bashir, Bee, Marr, Levin, Wrubleski, Corriveau, Butterfield, DePasse

Absent: Trombley, Johnson, Connors

2. **Public Comment:** No public was present.

3. **Meeting Business**

- a. **Approval of Minutes from March 17, 2021 meeting:**

Motion: Butterfield motioned to approve; Marr seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous by roll call.

4. **School Reporting**

Educational Program Director: Wrubleski shared that immediately following April Vacation, we will be opening to Full-day/5-day in-person learning - the 5th redesign the school this school year. She held the final staff meeting. Previous work included updated schedules, protocols, ordering materials/tools to facilitate these final weeks. The biggest concern is space - maintaining 3 feet of distance in a Montessori classroom where kids are moving constantly is a significant challenge. She added that this will be the first time this school year that staff and students will be coming back as a full community – adding that only 14 of our 168 students will remain in remote. The final 6 weeks of school will include internal assessments (we just completed our required state assessments) and will feature many end-of-year activities.

Wrubleski continued – this has been a very challenging year. Work of the admin team has been to try to make sure everyone is supported.

Talbot asked if the assessments created a lot of stress for the kids.

Wrubleski: The students seem to be going with the flow.

All agree, the kids are very resilient.

Butterfield asked if the state publishes the NH State Assessments (SAS) results?

Wrubleski: They do eventually publish, and we review them and share them with families as well.

Executive Director: Levin reminded the Board that we are accessing a variety of Title Funds. Title I to ensure a high-quality education for every child, by providing extra help to students who need it most; Title II for Professional Development; Title III Funds for English Language Learners/Programming; Title IV Funds supporting students' needs which can include staff professional development, technology and other learning tools and activities (currently, NH charter Schools get \$10,000 per year).

Levin also updated the Board regarding Manchester busing. Earlier in the day, she was part of a conversation about busing with Jane Waterhouse of the DOE and other Manchester charter school leaders. They discussed the plan for an upcoming (but not yet scheduled call with Manchester's Assistant Superintendent, Jen Gilles.

She also invited the Board to be part of the upcoming first meeting about equity and social justice. Levin has been working with two parents to explore formats for bringing our community together around these issues. This is not curricular related but rather a way to elevate the subject and bring members of our community together to explore and process these complex issues.

Levin also reviewed the current COVID-related Federal Funding allocated to Mill Falls thus far: ESSER 1 = \$15,345; ESSER 2 = 71,147; Supplemental 1 and 2: \$53,763. These funds have various restrictions and guidelines related to cost areas and approved activities. These funds have thus far been applied to technology purchase for 1:1 technology required for student remote learning; safety, facility and classroom supplies required for both remote and hybrid learning during COVID; and staffing related to both remote and hybrid learning during COVID.

5: Review and approval of the 2021-2022 Mill Falls School Calendar:

Levin explained that this year's calendar once again mostly matches the Manchester School District. This has been our practice since we opened to match as best we can for busing purposes. Mill Falls has 6.5-hour days as opposed to the more usual 6 hours. Our calendar is based on 175 school days. It includes 4.5 days in case of weather closings or delays, and a few professional development days beyond what Manchester has scheduled (also our usual plan).

Motion: DePasse motioned to approve the calendar as it was presented; Bee seconded.

Vote: Unanimous approval by roll call.

6: Review and approval of Policy to provide Mill Falls with the ability to access federal COVID-related funding to reimburse bonus pay made to Mill Falls Charter School staff during the COVID emergency.

Motion: Butterfield motioned to approve the calendar as it was presented; DePasse seconded.

Vote: Unanimous approval by roll call.

7: Discussion of DRAFT Budget for FY22 & ESSER II Funds

Motion: Bee moved that the Board moved to enter a non-public session as permitted by 91-A; 3a; DePasse seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous approval by roll call.

Motion: Butterfield moved to come out of non-public session; Bee seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous approval by roll call.

During the closed sessions, the Board reviewed and discussed salaries as part of their review of the draft budget for 2021/22. No actions were taken.

8. Next Meeting: Wednesday, May 19, 2021.

9. Adjournment Motion: Butterfield motioned to adjourn at 7:23pm; Johnson seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous approval by roll call.



Executive Director Report
April 21, 2021
Submitted by Meryl Levin

NH COVID-Related

Following the Governor's unexpected declaration at a press conference on April 1, that all NH public schools must offer 5 full days of school by April 19th, we applied for a waiver. In the days that followed the press conference, the DOE made it clear in follow-up meetings describing this Executive Order #89, that there were VERY few reasons that would garner cause for a waiver. Our first draft outlined all the obvious reasons – safe spacing, time for our staff to be fully vaccinated, and the fact that we had staffed up to meet the needs of our planned 3rd trimester – the 2 cohort/4-day hybrid model. In the end, we determined that the only waiver-worthy consideration would be based on staffing needs. On Friday evening, April 9th, the Commissioner of Education called me to inform me that our waiver had been approved. We have until May 3rd to open to full 5-day instruction. Several other districts and schools, including Manchester, have also applied and some have received this start date waiver. As required, we will continue to offer a remote model, which in our case features 2 dedicated remote teaching teams – K/Lower Elementary and Upper Elementary. We are diligently working to staff up to meet the needs of this new model (the 4th this year). This included our needing to hire 3 paraprofessionals, an assistant teacher (we have just hired one today!), and, if possible, an Upper Elementary Interventionist.

Beyond the waiver request and hiring work, our staff has reconfigured their classrooms to allow for a minimum of 3 feet between 'home base stations' in the classrooms (we had the students at 6' in our hybrid/2 cohort model). Additionally, we have ordered furniture and plexiglass dividers for tables in the classrooms and common space where needed. This has also required a revised scheduling for instruction, special education and intervention, specials, and a new plan for lunch, recess and bathroom use. There are of course MANY other details involved in this short-term shift. We have once again shared the protocol we will follow during this full-day instruction period. It has created another round of chaos, anxiety and frustration among staff. We have been clear to say that this is not anything we'd have asked of them now, nor in this way! Some of our families expressed anxiety about this change, though the majority will continue to send their children to in-person learning, with just 14 remaining in remote. Our current version of the Re-Opening to Hybrid Communication shared with our Families, has once again been adopted for this next phase of 5-day learning.

Another shocking move came at this week's Thursday press conference, where the Governor announced he'd be lifting the mask mandate. This will NOT impact our safety protocol here at school - all are expected to wear masks at all times (with dedicated mask-break areas, and of course except when eating lunch/snack). Additionally, our building will remain open only to students, essential staff, and emergency personnel. We will be holding on to what few tools remain to mitigate risk as we see our way to the end of this very challenging school year.

Required Reporting

There have not been any required reports since our last meeting. Looping back to the ELL Monitor Meeting reported here last month, it was determined that the DOE team does not need to go forward with that work. Turns out our ELL Plan was in place – but they had lost track of the copy we'd sent them. They are a great resource, and we look forward to continuing to work with them in support of our ELL students.

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 be shared with the full Board in the coming months.

Hybrid Learning Update

Our Hybrid Learning Model has run very smoothly since March 15th when we welcomed students back to school via the AM/PM 2-cohort model. Over 90% of our students enrolled in the 4-days per week - AM/PM Hybrid Model. Those who selected remote worked with our dedicated Remote Teaching Teams. Just 4 families chose to access the Manchester School District/ MTA bus which used the hub model during hybrid learning.

Facility

As we noted above, our classrooms have been re-designed to create more 'home base' areas for each student in the classroom, for full-time teaching, those are set up at 3' apart. We have also ordered additional furniture, signage (floor dots), materials for outside lunches and so much more! These unexpected expenses will be folded into our COVID Fed Fund expense funding. Laura has mapped out a lunch/recess schedule for both indoors and outdoors. We will aim to have lunch outdoors as much as possible.

Our Remote Teaching Staff will continue utilizing our **Weekend Material Distribution Plan** (materials left outside in plastic bins, organized by classroom) as needed.

Enrollment

This COVID year has been the most challenging and complex in terms of enrollment. During the year, we have seen more students than usual leave us for other settings. As always, the reasons for this are many – moving, employment changes, and in some cases the need to find any school that was open. Even at this late date, we have 3 families (5 children) who have unenrolled. At this point in the year, we feel it unwise to fill the spots as these weeks are filled with required State Assessments, followed by the final weeks of the year which also include our usual internal assessments followed by our year-end events and end-of-year project celebrations.

We will be welcoming next year's Kinder Students with our annual Kinder Interview Day on May 5th, just a few days after we re-open to in-full learning.

As is custom this time of year, we are also developing our 'watch list', keeping an eye on those who have indicated their plan to return on our required form in January, but are now not sure. Grace Eaton, our Project Manager, is in close contact with those on our waitlist that correspond with the grades with potential openings. That annual work of starting the year with a full 168 kicks into gear in a few weeks.

MFCS Child Care Program

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

Financial

Federal Funding to Support Us During COVID: Besides the normal upkeep of our billing cycles and work with our bookkeeper, I have spent a lot of time reviewing all of our COVID expenses to date – from personnel to materials to facility adjustments for COVID safety. To date NH schools have had 4 rounds of federal funding to help assist us – two rounds of ESSER funding and 2 rounds of 'supplemental' funding. These funding rounds have slight differences in terms of date ranges and allowable expenses. The total we have received through this funding is = \$140,256. It is a complex process of reviewing all costs related to COVID compared to allowable expenses and the various timelines. We have been told to expect information soon about a new round of these funds. Stay tuned!

Special Education: The flow of payment of Special Education invoices for services has been timely from all 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.

COVID/Health Related

The State's Department of Human Services, led by Dr. Chan, our state's epidemiologist, is now only providing school-partner meetings on the 1st and 3rd week of each month. Though there have been many changes in guidance and/or Executive Orders, the NH DHS has not dealt with those directly. In particular, they have previously spent a great deal of time talking about mitigation practices including not less than 3' of distance in a school setting, with 6' as ideal and required during unmasked time (lunch, snack), I remain unaware of new guidance related to the school re-opening.

As we prepare ourselves for the full-reopening, we will continue to seek information and wisdom from the Manchester Health Department who have been fantastic partners with us all along the way this year.

Our second and final **at-school COVID vaccine clinic for our staff will be held on Thursday, April 22nd**. We have canceled school on April 23rd, to allow staff to recover at home from any vaccination side effects they may experience.

MFCS Community Building & Volunteerism

I have had the pleasure of beginning work on a new initiative that has grown out of concern around racially motivated bias and violence against people of color and specifically people of Asian descent. I am currently working with two MFCS parents to prepare for establishing an Equity Learning & Action Group. We have scheduled our first meeting for Wednesday, March 5th. Please see future information for the time. We would LOVE to have you join us as part of our Mill Falls Community!

Human Resources

As stated above, we are continuing to seek additional staff to meet our needs for reopening to in-full learning. At this time, we still need 2 paras and subs. If you have ANY leads on potential staffers, please send them to Laura and I directly via email or phone. Thank you!!!!

Foundation News:

The Foundation currently holds \$503,974.48 in its accounts. I have confirmed that we will be able to participate again next year as a charitable beneficiary of funds raised through the NH gaming program.

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