



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 March 17, 2021

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

1. Call to Order, Roll Call & Welcome Public: 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.

Roll Call: Present: Connors, Butterfield, Talbot, Bashir, Marr, Wrubleski, Corriveau, Levin, Bee

Absent: DePasse, Trombley, Johnson.

2. Meeting Business

a. Approval of Minutes from February 17, 2021 meetings.

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

Vote: Approved unanimously.

3. School Reporting

Educational Program Director Wrubleski shared that since the last Board meeting, we had February Break and since have been what that plans we had shared at previous meetings. All classes are up and running – our 7 in-person hybrid classes and 2 new remote classroom. Our in-person classrooms are set up with “home base” spots for each child; these are separated by 6 feet for COVID physical distancing protocol. Our facility was mostly already ready, for example the touchless water fountain was in place. Everyone seems very happy to be back. Teachers and students are getting back into the swing of things. They began the week with community building activities, and then next week they will begin teaching lessons. This Thursday will be no school for the children, as the teachers conduct Parent / Teacher conferences.

Every minute counts in this half-day model. In a Montessori setting, there is a balance between learning during the lessons, and being able to use the materials that they have been taught to practice the lesson concepts. We are seeing a really smooth transition back for the students; they easily fell back into their routines.

Connors asked: Were you able to hire all staff you needed?

Wrubleski replied: Yes. For our Remote K/Lower Elementary class, we hired a Lower Elementary Montessori Teacher who is working with Mindy - they are co-teaching. For our Upper Elementary Remote Class, we hired a new teacher. She is joined by Lauren Kolbe who is teaching math to the 7 Upper Elementary Students in remote. There is a lot of mentoring going on to get our remote teaching teams up to speed. We have also hired 5 part-time paraprofessionals to cover the para hours in our students' IEPs. Mindy is still providing English Language Learner (ELL) Support (a part-time position) alongside her work as a remote co-teacher. We have not yet been able to hire a sub for our Upper El interventionist. We have just gotten a few applicants and Wrubleski will follow up.

Wrubleski also shared that one of our Upper Elementary Teachers abruptly resigned on Friday.

This was a surprise to everyone during a meeting at 10 am on Friday. The Upper Elementary Team didn't miss a beat – they jumped in to help out and work with us to plan for coverage. That classroom's Assistant Teacher, herself a certified teacher, stepped up to manage the classroom and the two other Upper El Lead Teachers will teach the Montessori math and cultural lessons. We will compensate the Upper Elementary Staff for going above and beyond and helping teach all the classes. It's so amazing how they've worked so hard, and they still reached out to help without hesitation.

Executive Director (*please also see the attached report*) More than 90% of our students are back in hybrid. A few more Lower Elementary students than Upper Elementary remained in remote. Those in school are so excited to be back. It is a very fast paced different type of day, but it works.

We had our 10th Annual Enrollment Lottery this week; it was once again held virtually. Gabi Zolla from SNHU was our Lottery Official. We had 14 siblings of current enrolled students in the Kinder class.

Today's NH Health and Human Services call included some updates related to COVID guidance. They referenced the CDC announcement allowing for 3-foot physical distancing in schools, rather than the previous guidance of 6 feet IF students do not move around the classroom. Since our students move around throughout their learning time, this will not impact our 'home-base' set up which Laura mentioned. They also announced that NH was lifting the quarantine guideline for those who travel outside of the New England states. Since our staff members are not yet vaccinated, we will not be changing our quarantine protocol currently. We will revisit after April Vacation when our staff will be 2 weeks after their second vaccination.

Connors asked: We are finding in my district that the HHS is not doing intensive contact tracing anymore. Will you and Wrubleski be doing that?

Levin: They say they are doing it, but we have heard it has been slow.

Staff Covid Vaccinations: Levin shared that the second vaccination day on April 22 will be followed by a full remote day because we can expect staff members to experience side effects.

Budget-to-Actual Review: No surprise trends, next month we will begin to see remote teachers' payroll numbers register in the report (they began in March). I am waiting on more information regarding the next round of federal COVID funding. One more round of funding from the state. Next we meet, a draft budget to actual plan in place to share. It will be created with the plan that we will be open in full in September. If we find that is not allowable, we will revisit the budget over the summer.

Connors asked: Do you think the funding from the government will cover staffing?

Levin: Yes and the salary from the Upper Elementary teacher that quit will be spread amongst the Upper El crew filling in.

Butterfied asked: How is the air filter system? Did the landlord install the right filters? *Levin:* Yes. And the HVAC system has fresh air 24/7.

The Board discussed the idea of being open in full next school year – will likely include masking and some amount of distancing. Schools/Districts are already deciding not to offer remote

options next school year.

5. Next Meeting: Before announcing the next meeting, Connors was joined by other Board members in again thanking Laura and Meryl for getting the school up and running with a focus on safety and wellbeing of the children.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 21, 2021. (Connors, 2 min)

6. Adjournment: Talbot motioned to adjourn at 6:40pm; Bee seconded the adjournment.

Vote: Unanimous.

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Executive Director Report
March 17, 2021
Submitted by Meryl Levin

Required Reporting

There have not been any required reports since our last meeting. However, we have gotten word that we have one again been chosen by the DOE for an evaluation of our English Language Learner Program later this spring.

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.

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

Monday marks the start of our 3rd and final trimester of the 2020/21 School Year. A year like no other, let's hope! Over 90% of our students have enrolled in the 4-days per week - AM/PM Hybrid Model. Just a small number will be using the MTA bus which will be using that hub model. Our dedicated remote teaching team has worked diligently over the last weeks to partner in the work involved in creating 2 new MFCS classrooms – the Arches Class (remote K/Lower EI Students) and Redwood (remote Upper EI). Our in-person teaching staff has readied the building and prepared new schedules and routines to welcome back our students to a familiar, albeit modified school experience. Please see the HR section below for information about our new staff.

Laura and I shared a very lengthy Re-Opening document with staff, and another Re-Opening to Hybrid Communication with our Families. All of that was shared last week, and share new protocols and systems we have put in place since the last time we had students learning in the Hybrid Model. Our Remote Students have been communicated with by us, as well as by their new teachers. There has been palpable excitement by students, families and staff as we move to this final Trimester.

Facility

As we **prepared to welcome students back to in-person learning**, our classrooms were re-designed to create 'home base' areas for each student in the classroom, set up 6' apart from one another. During lessons, the students will be between 3-6' feet apart. Additionally, we have added signage around the building and all adults will model the safety mitigation measures of mask-wearing, hand hygiene, physical distancing, daily wellness checks. Most of our staff will be working at school, only a small number will be working remotely during M/T/Th/Fri. All staff may work at home on Big Work Wednesdays – a fully remote day for all of our students.

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

Enrollment

All of our 4 **Virtual Lottery Information Sessions** were held via Zoom, were fairly well attended. We had 75 Kinder Applications; 55 Lower Elementary Applications; and 24 Upper Elementary Applications, for a total of 154. This is a bit lower than any previous lottery. As noted in previous reports, in a typical year, we receive anywhere between 175-250+.

Our 2021 Lottery Day is March 15th at 4:15pm. This will be held remotely, as we did in 2020. Our Lottery Official will be **Gabi Zolla**, Director of Strategic Partnerships at SNHU, where she is supporting the Global Education Movement and other SNHU social impact innovations.

MFCS ChildCare Program

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

Financial

Our **FY20 Audit** is 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.

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.

Additional Federal Funding to Support Us During COVID: We are still waiting for instructions related to the newest round of funding.

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 and more. Locally, late last week, our Governor **changed the quarantine-after-travel guidelines to being simply advisory**. We may review our current quarantine expectations following travel, but will do so only AFTER our staff is fully vaccinated.

Going forward, I will 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.

Working with the Manchester Health Department, I have arranged an **at-school COVID vaccine clinic for our staff**. The first shot will be administered on March 25th; the second on April 22nd. We will have a remote learning day on April 23rd, as some staff may have side effects from shot, and that way we can have learning proceed without having to be in the building with a proper students/teacher ratio.

MFCS Community Building & Volunteerism

Since our last meeting, our school community enjoyed the much-needed February Break and much of our work was focused on preparing for the start of Trimester 3. To that end, there was little opportunity for volunteerism and community events.

Human Resources

As you know from previous updates, staffing up for the 3rd Trimester proved to be very challenging. New Staffers and Staffing Assignments for our 3rd Trimester are as follows: Mindy Kacavas is co-teaching with a new staffer, Carole Beckwith in the Arches Room (remote K/Lower El class). In the Redwood Room (remote Upper El class), new staffer Angie Pomales (based in NY) will be the full-time teacher and Math will be taught to those Upper El students by Lauren Kolbe. We have also hired several new part-time paraprofessionals to cover that service needs in our students' IEPs. Mindy will continue as our (part-time) ELL Coordinator; Mindy's Reading Coach role (part-time) will be filled by Reading Support Person, Jen Zedler, (who will also continue as our IT Coordinator). We have not been able to hire a new Upper Elementary interventionist (a job held by Lauren Kolbe until this final term). Additional information about our staff can be found on our website, [by clicking here](#).

We did have one very unexpected, last minute change. On the morning of March 12th, Becky Barlow, Lead Teacher in Everglades, unexpectedly resigned, effective immediately. She cited personal reasons for making this abrupt decision. It was a shock to Laura and me for sure, but we were then deeply moved by the response of the Upper Elementary Team. They jumped into action without missing a beat to figure out how to support the Everglades Students and Marissa, who has served as the classroom's Assistant Teacher for the last few years! Their actions filled our hearts with gratitude. As announced to our Everglades families, math and cultural lessons will be delivered by the two other Upper Elementary Montessori Lead Teachers (in the Zion and Olympic classrooms). Marissa is a certified teacher and she will continue to handle the many language-based areas she's been managing all year, and will be the main classroom teacher going forward.

Foundation News:

For the first time, the Foundation joined scores of other NH non-profits as a charitable beneficiary of funds raised through the NH gaming program. Fund raised through this program in late Feb-Mar totaled \$63,584 after participation fees. The Foundation currently holds \$439,527.42 in its accounts (the \$63,584 not yet deposited). # # #

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