



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 November 17, 2021

Public Meeting held via Zoom

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

Connors called the meeting to order at 5:52pm. Noting that given the school's current COVID safety mitigation policy of limited building access to staff, students, Special Education service providers and emergency personnel, the Board met remotely. For meeting access, public was instructed to contact office@millfalls.org. Note: There were no members of the public who requested access before or during the meeting.

Present: Connors, Trombley, DePasse, Talbot, Marr, Dalton, Wrubleski, Levin, Corriveau. **Absent:** Butterfield, Bashier, Bee.

2. Public Comment: No public present.

3. Meeting Business

a. **Approval of Minutes** from October 2021 meetings.

Motion: Talbot motioned to approve to approve the October meeting minutes; Connors seconded.

Vote: Unanimous.

4. School Reporting

Educational Program Director: Wrubleski shared: Finished Assessments and Progress Reports have gone out with Virtual Teacher Conferences tomorrow. Thanksgiving next week, and will be incorporating some of the activities we usually do, including the Upper Elementary Feast (will be done by classroom instead of all together as a level due to COVID); Kindergarteners will do Friendsgiving, where they will make butter and applesauce and then they sit down and have a meal together.

Wrubleski also noted that we have finally hired an Upper Elementary Upper Interventionist. She has over 10 years' experience, has already been attending meetings, etc. She is very positive and excited to be here. Still looking to hire paraprofessionals.

Connors noted it's nice to hear things sound 'normal'. Wrubleski added that there is still a lot of work for the teachers as students seem to be behind, even maturity-wise. She noted this is not unique to Mill Falls but across the country/world.

Connors asked: For students that have been exposed or test positive, are the teachers helping them or how does that work? Wrubleski replied that remote work options are provided for them during their isolation or quarantine, and we do have a Remote Coordinator who helps them and starts the day with a morning meeting of the at-home students which helps to track attendance and keep them connected to each other and school; there is no live instruction except for students who have Special Education services. Those services are provided remotely, via Zoom.

Executive Director: Levin noted she does not yet have any update regarding lease renewal; no word back from the landlord's broker. In terms of community engagement, she shared that one of our families, own the Al Basha restaurant and they provided lunch for the entire staff during our last Professional Development Day. Very thoughtful of them, and delicious! (so if you are a fan of Middle Eastern food, we highly recommend it!).

Levin also shared that at a recent Charter Leaders meeting the group spent a few minutes discussing Teacher burnout. – brief conversation while waiting to start. Meryl shared that she would like to work with Jill to request funds from the Foundation for a bonus for the staff for the end of the year, and asked the Board to write each staffer a card to thank them and show leadership’s appreciation in a personal way. Talbot asked Levin to put together a list of things the teachers have done, to personalize the cards; DePasse asked Levin to have cards available at the Saturday Workshop.

Levin ended by sharing some COVID updates released by the NH-DHHS, noting that cases among 0-9 year olds are currently above the highest peak from last year. And overall, the average of the last 7 days is just below the highest case numbers so far in the pandemic. She added that the case load at Mill Falls has been managed largely by mitigation and parent partnership. Masking has helped contain the spread when there have been cases, keeping our numbers relatively low.

Corriveau asked if we will be able to get any data about student vaccinations. Levin was unsure how that might be attained, but will look into it, as the vaccination program continues to unfold in NH for children 5-11.

6. Program:

a: Brief Discussion of BOT Retreat/Workshop Day Saturday 9-12:30

Connors noted that the Retreat/Workshop Day will focus on learning about each others, educating everyone on topics that have been previously discussed.

7. Next Meeting: Wednesday, December 15, 2021 @ 5:45pm (Connors, 2 min)

8. Public Comment* (10 min)

(Members of the public may address the Board for 2 minutes each, and will be called upon in order by the Board Chair)

9. Adjournment. Talbot motioned to adjourn at 6:32pm; DePasse seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous.



Executive Director's Report
For the November 17, 2021
MFCS School Board Meeting
Submitted by Meryl Levin

Required Reporting

This month, we reported our **Per Pupil Enrollment** to the NH Department of Education. This is linked to/required for our second round of state funding for the 2021/22 school year.

There continue to be several small surveys and data points that we have reported to the DOE, as required annually.

Board Related

Jill Connors in collaboration with Naomi Butterfield and I have been planning the upcoming **Board Retreat/Workshop Day for this coming Saturday, November 20th from 9am-12:30pm**. Each Trustee has been asked to complete the Self-Survey (email sent 11/11). If you have not yet done so, please do by Monday at 5pm! Additional Workshop Day details to follow.

Facility

We have not yet heard any additional details re: the **lease renewal process** following our meeting with, and following up email to Roger Dieker, the landlord's broker. The email I sent contained a list, as requested by Mr. Dieker, of items that currently require maintenance/attention.

COVID Update

As most of you are aware the caseload in NH is on a steady rise, along with hospitalizations and deaths. Last week, case numbers hit a one-day high matched only 7 other days during the entire pandemic here in NH. We are seeing a small, but consistent case load in our Mill Falls school community. This has created some staffing challenges in recent weeks. It's worth noting that we have had just 1 or 2 cases in any given classroom – masking and other mitigation measures are clearly effective in containing the spread!

We continue to follow the many steps (shared in my report last month), when we learn of new cases, and are continuing to send our 'Friday COVID round up' communication to all families and staff to provide them with the big picture of our caseload. This is especially important as the state's dashboard has become highly inconsistent this fall, unfortunately.

In response to the challenges of finding COVID tests appointments, we developed a multi-step protocol – with guidance from the Manchester Health Department – allowing families and staff to utilize self/at-home rapid COVID tests for those with COVID-related symptoms. To view the protocol, visit: <https://millfalls.org/covid-testing-information>. We are also so appreciative to now have a free PCR testing site in Manchester where our families and staff can go to get PCR tested and receive their results in a timely (1-2 days) manner.

MFCS ChildCare Program

Due to the COVID pandemic, this program is suspended until further notice. Several families have been able to enroll in childcare at the Boys and Girls Club; a bus transports the children from Mill Falls to the Club daily.

Enrollment

We will soon be turning our attention to our 2022 Lottery! This will be our 11th lottery. As usual, the Lottery Enrollment Application will be available online just after the New Year and be available through mid-March. We will also be hosting Lottery Information Sessions (likely still to be done virtually) during that time. If you know anyone who is interested in applying (or should be), please direct them to send us

an email to Admissions@MillFalls.org asking that they be put on the 2022 Lottery Info List. Please encourage friends, neighbors, and colleagues to consider applying to Mill Falls. Thank you!

Human Resources:

Laura and I are thrilled to share that we have **hired our Upper Elementary Interventionist**; Jill Bradley comes to us most recently from the Manchester School District. We have also **hired a part-time paraprofessional**, Lauren Doukas. Lauren has been a uber-volunteer for years with us and is proud mom to 1 current and 2 past Mill Falls Students. Their full bios (along with all staff) can be found here: <https://millfalls.org/education/administration-faculty/>. Please help spread the word - we are still looking for additional paraprofessionals!

Last week, I received information regarding our **staff health insurance** rates for plans offered to qualifying staff. Our broker has also provided a plan for me to consider that is NH only. I will be speaking with staff to explore their interest in this new plan. It is expected that the Finance Committee will discuss this at its December meeting.

Financial

The auditors have all materials for our **FY21 Audit** which is once again being done remotely this year. Once completed, our audits are sent to the DOE and posted on our website.

Thus far, **Special Education reimbursements** from sending districts are arriving in a timely manner. The payments we have received will be posted in the November Budget to Actual.

As discussed previously, we are moving forward with accessing our **title funding**. Last week, we filed the necessary paperwork with our new Title III consortium in support of our ELL program. We, along with the Birches Academy Charter School are part of this new group.

A reminder that we have previously shared our plans for our **ESSER III funds**. Review of the plan can be found here: <https://millfalls.org/mill-falls-esser-funds-usage-plan/>. To date, we have completed our reimbursement requests for the **ESSER I** funds and uploaded our **ESSER II plan** which is being reviewed by the DOE team.

MFCS Community Building & Volunteerism

Earlier this year, I shared that two of our students participated in a **Virtual International Peace Summit** with children from around the world. The Summit was organized by Jay Bonsigl, the same person who organizes the Delta Dental Leadership Summit which has been on hold since COVID arrived. The Peace Summit was a 3+ hour event. For their required follow up work, our students, both 6th year students (both of whom also participated in the Leadership Summit as 4th year students), are putting together a website about peace, aimed at providing resources for their fellow students. Stay tuned for a link once the project is complete!

****Please consider attending**** This Thursday, November 18th, the *Equity, Social Justice & Belonging Learning Group* will be hosting a **Family Book Club Night: Celebrating Native American Voices** (the first in an occasional series). **This virtual event will be held from 6:30-7:30pm.** A reminder that the *Equity, Social Justice & Belonging Learning Group* was organized last spring. This growing collection of Mill Falls Community Members seeks to learn together about social and racial justice, equity and belonging. The group gathers regularly (all virtually so far) to learn from one another's life experiences and engage together in meaningful ways to make a difference in our families and community. It would be wonderful if some of our Trustees could join the event. We will be sharing the Zoom link and book info early this coming week.

Foundation News:

The **Foundation's 990** has been filed with the IRS and the state's AG's office, as required. The Foundation **currently holds** \$512,574.43 in its accounts.

**Educational Program Director
Board Report
November 17, 2021**

Assessments and Progress Reports: This year teachers embarked on the same path of assessment as past years. Teachers administered the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark assessment for reading, the Scholastic Math Inventory for math, DIBELS for reading fluency and a writing prompt that was scored using the 6 Traits rubrics. Teachers then will take this information in conjunction with their observations and work samples to analyze a student's performance within the Montessori continuum. This data is input into ALMA, our in-house online reporting service and parents received official reports on Friday, November 12th. Parents and teachers will meet on November 18th to discuss these reports.

Data Team Meeting: The team met to review data to determine the need for student intervention supports as well as to discuss instructional supports as a whole school.

Fairy Tale Tasting, Science Alive and Favorite Book Characters: In our Covid world, it can be challenging to incorporate the parent community into our environment. We we're successful in our endeavor on October 29th with our all-school Curriculum Parade. Classrooms each studied various topics over the course of the month in October and then came to school to present their topics dressed as their curriculum focus. In the kindergarten, students dressed as their favorite character. In the Lower Elementary students researched and created Who Am I? riddles based on vertebrates/invertebrates, living/non-living, and phylum. In the Upper Elementary, students studied different versions of fairy tales from around the world and dressed as their preferred character.

Hiring: We have officially hired a new upper elementary interventionist. Jill Bradley comes to us from the Manchester School District and has years of experience as a special education teacher in various grade levels and settings. She started on November 9th. Welcome Jill!