



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 December 15, 2021 @ 5:45pm

Public Meeting held via Zoom

1. Call to Order: called the meeting to order at 5:46pm.

Welcome: Under Gov Exec #12 and following the school 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.

Roll Call (Connors): Connors, Trombley, Butterfield, Talbot, Dalton, Bashir, Corriveau, Marr, Bee, Wrubleski, Levin; DePasse joined part-way through the meeting.

2. Public Comment: No Public was present.

3. Meeting Business

a. Approval of Minutes from November 2021 meeting. **Motion:** Following the correction of the spelling of Talbot's name, Talbot motions to approve; Connors seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous vote.

5. School Reporting

Educational Program Director, Wrubleski: Alongside other academics, classrooms have been focused on cultural lessons, typical for this time of year for us. Upper Elementary classes are working to complete their Family Heritage Project. Next Tuesday, the kids will discuss their families' backgrounds following the interviews they have done with relatives, some of which are live outside of the country. Lower Elementary has been more focused on the main holidays of this season – Hannukah, Christmas and Kwanza. Kindergarten has been working on their life size Gingerbread house and other December holiday activities.

Wrubleski is continuing her work on our Suicide Protocol. She noted that a lot has changed for supports and there are more resources out there as the needs have risen due to COVID. Our next Professional Development Day (in January) will be focused on our policy-required annual staff training about suicide prevention and will also focus on our new protocols. Levin added that Hind Bashier, who is a Mill Falls parent, and current Board Member, will be organizing a lunch for the staff – especially since this will be an emotionally challenging day with this difficult subject matter.

Connors asked: Who is presenting? Wrubleski shared that we will be working with an online training focused on how to respond to emergent situations, whereas last year was more focused on how to be aware.

Connors asked: Can we do the Montessori moments again starting up in January? Levin/Wrubleski agreed.

Executive Director Levin shared that we do have a few college students who are able to join us for a few weeks during their college breaks as **substitutes and help us with Paraprofessional** deficits in the classrooms. An important reminder – if you or someone you know is interested in applying, please send them to our website Millfalls.org.

She reminded Trustees that items collected from our **Annual Winter Warm Things and Coat Drive** will be shared with the International Institute which is helping to resettle the many Afghans who are being resettled in and around Manchester. Among that group is 16-20 children. Levin met with the Director of the Institute as well as Mindy Kacavas (our ELL Coordinator) and two members of our Foundation who are aiming to help with the family resettlement. Needs include transportation, food, and housing, as well as helping get the children school supplies. Levin is waiting to get a list from the institute of children's ages to help gather materials and will share an update once she has one.

The Foundation's 2021 Annual Appeal went out to over 150 people. Should trustees know anyone interested in helping NH children, please direct them to us to help fund our Public Montessori school!

Our 2022 Lottery kicks off on Jan 3rd (application online and paper as needed). Info about our Lottery Information Sessions will be online and have already been shared with our 2022 Lottery mailing list. If Trustees know someone interested in entering the lottery or has questions, please have them send us an email to admissions@millfalls.org and Grace can add them to email list or respond as needed.

Butterfield asked: Is the Foundations' Spring Breakfast happening this year? Levin said that decisions have not been made due to the current Covid situation.

6. Program:

a: BOT Retreat/Workshop Day Following Up: BOT Development Next Steps Discussion

Connors thanked Trustees again for coming together a few weeks back for the retreat. She reminded the Board of some of the plans that were put forth at that session, which include:

- Focus on populating just three committees this year: Charter, Governance and Finance.
- The Board will hold office elections and committee assignments at the January Annual Meeting. If anyone would like to run for any officer positions, please reach out to Connors to discuss. She asked members to review the committee descriptions in preparation for the next meeting. She and Levin will be talking with the organization Board on Track, for coaching and board development resources this coming year. Funds will need to be requested from the Foundation.
- Potential dates for the January retreat AFTER the annual meeting are: the last Sat in Jan 29th, or Feb 5th
- Connors asked about the bylaws in terms of Board size/makeup, and Levin responded that there may be not less than 7 Trustees, of those there must be not less than 2 parents and not less than 4 community members. Not more than 20% of Board or 1 person (whichever is less) may serve on another public school board; and no members may be related/immediate family.

7. Next Meeting: Wednesday, January 19, 2021 @ 5:45pm

8. Adjournment:

Motion: At 6:16 Trombley motioned to adjourn; Butterfield seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous.



**Educational Program Director
Board Report
December 14, 2021**

December Early Release Professional Development: We decided to utilize our early release time this month to reflect on classroom practices and structures to best meet our learners and that's done through observation. Elizabeth Slade from Montessori in Action led a 3-hour workshop on the observation process and offered a variety of tools to implement in the classroom. Observation is the core process we use as Montessorians to determine a student's progress academically and socially, but with so many new Covid procedures and struggles returning from remote learning, observation has been underutilized as a problem solving tool for teachers.

Parent Teacher Conferences: The first conferences of the year were held just before Thanksgiving. Parents and teachers are offered 20 minutes to discuss the progress report that was sent out via ALMA one-week prior and to celebrate strengths or discuss ways to support each child individually. This conference is very well attended annually and essential to our mission of working with parents collaboratively as a team.

Cultural Studies in December: This year, the kindergarten has focused their cultural study around Jan Brett's story- *The Gingerbread Man*. Students colored and created their own life size gingerbread house, counted and graphed gingerbread men and of course decorated their very own gingerbread house. The lower elementary has focused on 4 different celebrations around the world- Christmas, Kwanzaa, Chanukah, Diwali. The historical significance of these celebrations was discussed, and small projects completed based on the traditions celebrated. The Upper Elementary has taken a more narrowed viewpoint of traditions and decided to look closely at student's family heritage by completing a family tree and deeper study of their family history. On December 21st, students will be able to bring in items that are significant to their heritage and share with their peers as a representation of their family background.



Executive Director's Report
For the December 15, 2021
MFCS School Board Meeting
Submitted by Meryl Levin

Required Reporting

Following the filing of our November **Per Pupil Enrollment** report to the NH Department of Education, we received the second of four state Per Pupil Aid Payments 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.

The annual **US Civil Rights Data Reporting** site has opened. Grace and I will tackle this lengthy report that seeks to capture information about our student body (not individual students). The report is due later this winter.

Board Related

Thanks again to the Board for gathering in mid-November for a **Retreat/Workshop Day**. The agenda now holds a section for updates in regards to Board development work.

Facility

The Fire Marshal completed his **Annual Fire Inspection**. His report has now been filed with the DOE, as per the annual requirement.

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 on 10/27/21, contained a list, as requested by Mr. Dieker, of items that currently require maintenance/attention. I will follow up with him again this coming week.

Related to our facility is our required paperwork for state-supported **Lease Aid** granted to schools like ours that rent their facility. The Lease Aid Application (the required tool to notify the state of our intent to request aid, and updating any lease changes) is due in early January. I have been in contact with the DOE staff who manage this program, making them aware of our lease renewal work this year.

COVID Update

Since I last reported, NH has taken first place in terms of the highest rate of infection per capita in the country. This has meant a significant increase in hospitalizations and daily deaths. Just as this is occurring, children aged 5-11 have been able to access COVID vaccinations. Near daily, we have students who are getting their first or second **vaccine**. As NH and national public health officials continue to say, vaccination (including boosters) is the best thing we can do to help reduce the case load. In our weekly newsletter I share information about how families can access vaccinations for all currently approved age groups. These sites include weekly clinics at the Manchester Health Department. I hope you see, and share, this information from our weekly newsletter.

COVID testing sites in the area have become overwhelmed in recent weeks. The state site in Manchester which was fast and efficient is no longer able to produce test results in 24-48 hours. In many cases it is 4 days before results are shared with patients. This can mean several days of missed school before results are received. As shared in my last report, several weeks ago we introduced a multi-step protocol to accept BinexNow home/self-tests which some families have used.

We continue to experience 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 continue to have just 1 or 2 cases in any given classroom – masking and other mitigation measures are clearly effective in containing the spread! That said, we are keenly aware that the surge in cases could certainly impact us more significantly at any time.

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 weekly COVID 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.

Enrollment

We have begun to communicate out the timeline for our **2022 Lottery** to our families and the general public. This will be our 11th lottery! The Lottery Enrollment Application will be available online beginning January 3rd through March 9th, with Lottery Day on March 15th. We will also be hosting **Lottery Information Sessions** (via Zoom) 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!**
- **We are looking for a Lottery Day Official – if you have any ideas** of someone who would enjoy working with Grace, Jen, and I and getting to know us a bit, please be in touch with me directly.

Human Resources:

As you are aware, there is a significant school staffing shortage every where and for us this has most impacted our ability to find paraprofessionals and subs. Fortunately, we do have two college students who will be spending much of their December and January Break with us! They will be helping to provide paraprofessional support and sub support as needed. Additionally, a para who started the year with us, then moved out of the area is back and will be rejoining our team when we return from December Break. Please help spread the word - we are still looking for additional paraprofessionals!

This past month, I have worked closely with our health insurance broker to compile a small selection plans for our qualifying staff to select from; our renewal month with Anthem is January. We sought to find plans that would be a close match to what we currently offer and that which would have only a modest price increase. Qualifying staff members will make their plan selection before we depart for December Break, and that coverage will begin on Jan 1. Additionally, our dental plan renews in February and those rates will be shared with staff shortly as well.

Financial

No word yet from our auditors who have all materials for our **FY21 Audit**. Once completed, our audit is sent to the DOE and posted on our website.

Thus far, **Special Education reimbursements** from sending districts are arriving in a timely manner.

This year the state has expanded their guidance and expectations for the very large report known as the DOE-25. Following the federal audit of the state's use and distribution of federal funds a few years back, the DOE has increased its oversight and reporting requirements. Each year they seem to pass on more and more of those reporting requirements to schools like ours who receive federal funds. The infusion of COVID funds and carryover of title funds (ie: federal approval of an extension of the usual time period those funds are available) has created new layers for the federal funds team at the DOE to track. Our bookkeeper and I have been in close contact with the DOE and our auditor as we work through the new reporting requirements and necessary adjustments to our QuickBooks file to reflect these changes. You may notice some adjustments to our monthly budget-to-actual reports as a result of these new reporting requirements.

MFCS Community Building & Volunteerism

On November 18th, the *Equity, Social Justice & Belonging Learning Group* hosted its first event - a **Family Book Club Night: Celebrating Native American Voices** (the first in an occasional series). This virtual evening event was attended by a small, but deeply engaged, group of students and their parents/guardians. The evening's MC, Mill Falls Parent **Sandra Jin**, was joined by two Upper Elementary student readers - Christian Drouart and Naomi Rodriguez. The book - *When We Were Alone*, which is written by David A. Robertson and illustrated by Julie Flett - was new to most of those who gathered. Robertson and Flett are both Native North Americans. It is a simply told story (for young readers) of a young Cree girl and her grandmother whose time together also reveals the grandmother's experience at a Canadian residential school for Native children. As The Horn Book Magazine wrote, this is "a quiet story of love and resistance." Before the reading, Sandra shared some cultural and historical information about the Cree Tribe. After the reading, the group was divided into two Zoom breakout rooms organized by age and engaged in honest and engaging discussions about the story and its meaning.

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. All, including Trustees, are invited to join!

This Friday we will close out our **Annual Coat (and Warm Items) Drive**. Our wonderfully generous community has already donated two boxes full of coats as well as hats, gloves, scarfs and boots. This year we have partnered with the International Institute of New England. This local non-profit's mission is to create opportunities for refugees and immigrants to succeed through resettlement, education, career advancement and pathways to citizenship. Donations collected will help newly arriving families be prepared for whatever NH's winter sends our way! If you have anything you'd like to donate, the donation box has been placed outside our front doors, where it will remain until this Friday afternoon.

Our Project Manager, Grace Eaton, recently delivered orders of **Spirit Wear** to our kiddos and families. The clothes feature our Spirit Wear Logo, which was designed by our spirit-wear partner a few years back. It is dynamic and integrates the word Montessori along with our name, as per one of our important strategic planning goals! We publicize the ordering timeline in our weekly newsletter. This year, we have ordered a few extra pieces. If you are interested, let me know and we can see what Grace may have in your size!

MFCS ChildCare Program

As previously noted: 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.

Foundation News:

This month, the Foundation enthusiastically approved the request to provide funds of \$12,325 for a bonus to all Mill Falls staff members in recognition of their exceptional work during these complex COVID times. That transfer has been made, following a formal request by Jill and I to the Foundation. Those payments will be included in the next payroll.

December marks the Foundation's first formal fundraiser of year. The **2021 Annual Appeal** will be mailed on Monday to over 150 recipients – each of whom have supported Mill Falls in the past. **The ask features student artwork, as it always does, as well as a celebration of our 10-year anniversary.** Each Trustee should receive an appeal in the mail (as we won't be meeting in person). **A reminder that MFCS Trustees**

are asked by the Foundation to contribute to the school in meaningful ways during the course of each year, and encourage others to do so. The Foundation thanks Trustees and all community members for supporting the work of securing funds for our school's ongoing sustainability.

The Foundation **currently holds** \$500,749.17 in its accounts (following the transfer noted above).

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