



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 February 16, 2022

Public Meeting held via Zoom

For Zoom Meeting information or difficulties connecting, please email [office@millfalls.org](mailto:office@millfalls.org)

### 1. Call to Order, Roll Call & Welcome Public (Connors)

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](mailto:office@millfalls.org). **Note: There were no members of the public who requested access before or during the meeting.**

**Roll Call:** Connors, Marr, Dalton, Bashier, Butterfield, Corriveau, Wrubleski, Levin

**Not present:** DePasse, Trombley, Bee (maternity leave)

### 2. Public Comment: No public present.

### 3. Meeting Business

**Approval of Minutes** from January 2022 meetings:

**Motion:** Butterfield motioned to approve; Connor seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous.

### 4. Montessori Moment: A lesson on the Montessori Checkerboard material presented by Colleen Costa, Upper Elementary Lead Teacher, Zion Room. This lesson showed an introduction to double-digit multiplication using this Montessori material.

### 6. School Reporting

**Educational Program Director** (Wrubleski)

**100<sup>th</sup> Day 2022:** Tomorrow is 100<sup>th</sup> day. There will be activities and a slide show of images from our first 100 days this year. This is our 10<sup>th</sup> 100 day, also it is National Acts of Kindness Day. Lots of activities for the kids tomorrow, hoping all staff dress up for the day.

**Assessments:** This year we changed the way we did the assessments – creating kind of an Assessment Palooza, you could say! We spent one week administering midyear internal assessments, rather than spreading them out over several weeks. Staff felt good about this change. We also feel really good about the good improvements/nice growth in learning we are seeing. Obviously, having the kids in person as school is producing very positive results. These assessments, along with Montessori classroom observations feed into our 2<sup>nd</sup> trimester progress reports that go out in March. Basepoint data was assessments, and now have time for more

**Student Transitions through MFCS Program Levels:** At our February Early Release/Professional Development Day, we started talking about student transitions. Transition here is more complex than in traditional schools because the children are with the same teachers/same classroom for 3 years in our Montessori program. Kinder (is just one year here) moves to Lower Elementary, 3<sup>rd</sup> year students in our Lower Elementary move to Upper Elementary, and our 6<sup>th</sup> year Upper move on to another educational setting. We discussed what the children need, how can the parents help, and what the classrooms need? It seems likely we will change up some of the ways we do Step Up, to help make transitions easier and more meaningful, especially as our students (post COVID) are needing more emotional support.

**Butterfield asked:** What does Step-up night look like? Wrubleski responded: It's supposed to be a combination of meeting the potential 3 teachers at the new program level, seeing the works and materials in the classrooms and there is a social/emotional piece. At our Step-Up Night for parents, we

have seen fairly low attendance in the past - 30-50% of transitioning student's parents' show up, with 50 being high. The last two years we've done Step-Up night via Zoom, but you don't get the same feel of the classroom. If we could do it in person it would be preferable, as some parents still have not seen the Montessori Classrooms as we've been working with COVID mitigations for 2 years.

**Executive Director** (Levin, pls also see attached report)

**Reporting:** Levin shared that the majority of her time these days is spent doing reporting. Reports for all the federal funding, which is more involved than in the past given the COVID/CARES/ESSER funds we have received. Civil Rights Data reporting is now complete. The 6<sup>th</sup> month required ESSER funding update will be completed soon as well.

**Levin shared that she has been asked to** join the NH Charter School Alliance Board – that is the long-standing NH Charter Association which MFCS has been a part of since we opened.

**COVID Update:** Levin highlighted that the state changed COVID reporting requirements for schools, and it is now only being done in the aggregate, once per week. In an overall way, the State is no longer tracking exact case numbers in schools, or elsewhere. This makes understanding the community spread levels challenging – something we have long been told to link our mitigation measures to, among other factors.

**Lottery:** Today we held our 3<sup>rd</sup> of 4 Lottery Info Session. Over the last few years, we have seen a significant drop in the number of applications - something many NH charter schools are seeing. Numbers appear to be off by about 20% from pre-COVID days. *Marr added:* They are seeing the same thing in higher education. She is aware that parents aren't getting the same cues they would get from teachers in childcare and preschool programs because they are not going into buildings.

**Cabinets Needed:** Levin reminded the BOT that we are looking for gently used cabinets that could be hung on the walls at school – we are out of floor space at this point. Several Board members said they had contacts to reach out to and will be back in touch with Levin.

## 7. Committee Reporting

### A: Finance Committee: (with Trombley out, Levin provided the report):

Levin began by noting that the monthly budget-to-actual in board packet does not show any surprising information or trends. At the Committee meeting, Trombley, the Treasurer, did a great job of bringing new committee members up to speed about the kinds of reports we produce and review – budget-to-actual, balance sheet and cash flow. This education of the committee is important so that when we bring forth a budget for approval that has a significant deficit, we understand the impact relative to our overall financial picture – the knowledge of where our funds come from, and what we have in the bank and what the foundation has.

The Committee also spent time on priorities - the renewal budget, including the annual salary increases; potential investment ideas to be worked on later this calendar year; an admin list of maintenance/face lift our space needs as we prepare for another 5 years here. *Connors asked:* Is there a facility maintenance rotating schedule? For example, every five years the carpet is replaced, so it's not all at one time. Levin responded: Each year, the unused budget line that is for maintenance is rolled over and put into our saving's account. That has been in place for several years. Now we need to determine - do we paint every classroom, or certain ones? What do the bathrooms and kitchen need? The floors? The admin team will consider this with teacher input this spring.

*Butterfield asked:* As we talk about budget, it leads me to ask about the lease renewal. We don't have one yet, right? Levin responded that we are still waiting. It is concerning, but they continue to tell us they are working on it. We were told we would have it weeks ago. We began lease renewal discussions in October so that we would be well ahead of budget season. This is very frustrating for our organization. Connors asked if there is potential they would not give us a lease. Levin shared that our current lease does allow for an at-market renewal. She added that the delay is both concerning and anxiety provoking. *Butterfield added:* They are supposed to give us notice if they are not renewing. Levin noted that at the October meeting, we were told all would move forward with ease. If that was not the plan, there is set amount of time – long ago passed now – when they would have had to tell us.

## B: Charter Committee Report:

**Renewal:** Committee Chair Dalton noted that the Committee heard from Levin about the big picture of steps to charter renewal. Not surprisingly there not many tasks the Committee can do – so much is school-based. However, the most important item for ALL Trustees is to **SAVE THE DATE of May 5<sup>th</sup>, our Renewal Site Visit! As many Board members there as possible are expected to attend the stakeholder's meeting (30 min) with the visiting renewal team.** The renewal team will also meet with parents, teachers, the admin team and will interact with students. *Connors noted:* she will be out of country but will make a video to share. The Committee is also helping put together the family survey – results of which will be shared in our renewal packet. Marr, not on the Charter Committee, but a marketing professional will lend her expertise to the survey's completion; comments due before the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Legislation updates.** Dalton reminded Trustees that the Committee Minutes list out some of the many education bills that relate to charter schools. The group discussed some of the details of those bills. Dalton asked the group to please keep an eye on the bills as they go through process. Levin stated that we do have a parent that is on the NH legislator and perhaps it would be helpful to bring him in to update the Board about current legislative actions. Levin noted that she has been working with Committee Member Bashier have several people working on letters of support for our renewal package. The Committee will meet again February 21<sup>st</sup>.

## C. Governance Committee Report:

Committee Chair Connors discussed the focus of the Governance Committee's first meeting – the Annual Meeting and ongoing professional development work about engagement and accountability. The Governance Committee is all about the Board's Trustees. During our December development meeting, we created an outline for what we hope to gain through these Committees. Sounds like the meetings this month went really well. The Governance Committee plans to stay consistent with meetings on the same day each month.

In the Committee's conversation about our engagement work, Levin and Dalton came up with some ideas about facilitators other than Board on Track which no longer seems to be the right match for us, especially given the price. Levin was asked to reach out to Gerri King – a communications consultant who is working with Mill Falls this year. She is thrilled to have the opportunity to also work with the Board. Dalton sent out a doodle for dates - **looks like March 26<sup>th</sup> may be our day. If you have not yet completed the Doodle poll, please do so ASAP!**

The Governance Committee will meet next on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 6pm via Zoom.

## 8. Program:

### a: Document Retention Policy

Levin shared that this policy was never completed by the Finance Committee after it was first drafted way back in 2014. This version of the policy is simple and broad-based. The practical application of the policy will be guided by a list which will be kept up to date about accounting, communication and other document retention requirements.

**Motion:** Connors motioned to accept the policy; Butterfield seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous.

### b: Update of the Student Safety & Violence Prevention Anti-Bullying Policy

Wrubleski discussed the updated to our policy which was originally written in 2012, before her position as EPD existed. In 2014, the policy was updated again, to reflect the new titles in the administration, but still incorporated the Board. The new policy revisions takes the Board and ED out and adds our Social Worker in instead – a natural addition since these issues are most usually socially/emotionally based/linked. That is the team that does the investigating and questioning. Then if the family disagrees with the conclusion, they would then follow our grievance policy – beginning with going to the ED, then the grievance policy would kick in if they do not agree with ED's position – that would they go to the Board.

*Butterfield asked* for clarity about the team's role.

*Connors clarified* that in her school setting, like this policy maps out – she would do the investigation, then she makes the decision and if they don't agree then they go to the step. Wrubleski further clarified that

the investigation includes speaking to all parties involved and putting the story and events together; the state has very clear guidelines – even a specific checklist – that must be followed.

*Connors noted* that because these investigations are extremely time sensitive, the words should be added ‘or designee’ in case the EPD is on vacation, out sick, etc. The group agreed that change would be made throughout.

**Motion:** Connors moved to approve with the above addition the policy changes; Marrs seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

**9. Next Meeting:** Wednesday, March 16, 2022 @ 5:45pm

**10. Adjournment:** Connors motioned to adjourn at 7:20 pm; Butterfield seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous.



## Executive Director's Report

For the February 16, 2022  
MFCS School Board Meeting  
Submitted by Meryl Levin

### Required Reporting

This month we completed the annual **US Civil Rights Data Reporting** – a lengthy report that seeks to capture information about our student body (not individual students). We also reported our student body numbers for our 3<sup>rd</sup> per-pupil payment from the state. I am currently working to complete the required 6<sup>th</sup> month update report on our ESSER III grant. This is the first such 'update' and is required in a completely different format than the initial Safe School Opening Plan.

### Board Related

All three of the activated BOT committees met this month, and each will be reporting out at our February Board Meeting.

### Facility

The landlord's broker, Roger Dieker, has responded to our Broker, Will Kanteres, letting him know we would be receiving a lease draft last week. We do not yet have that in hand.

**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.

### COVID Update

Last week, the state released new guidance for schools to follow outlining changes in **case reporting** as well as recommendations to contact tracing for Covid-19. The state is no longer collecting data on individual cases in school settings, or beyond. Mill Falls will continue to gather information about each case and share alerts with those classrooms, buses or other cohorts who may have been exposed. We will also continue to provide a Friday COVID case report. For the time being, all mitigations will remain in place. We are working with the Manchester Health Department to establish a road map going forward. They have been clear that we are not close to being able to let our guard down, nor should we move from our current mitigations given what they know about the extent of community spread currently. We are so appreciative of each and every member of our Mill Falls Community for their partnership in keeping one another safe and our children engaged in learning.

### Enrollment

Lottery applications continue to come in – the Lottery Enrollment Period ends on March 9<sup>th</sup>. Lottery Day is on March 15<sup>th</sup>. We have hosted two of four Virtual Lottery Information Sessions (via Zoom).

**Our next Virtual Lottery Information Session will be held on Wednesday, February 16<sup>th</sup> from 10-11am.**

**The Zoom link info**

is: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87505244010?pwd=aElPbzJ3cUdFRttdHpYREQ2b2kwUT09>

Passcode: 8tVRe5

- **If you know anyone who is interested in applying (or should be),** please direct them to join us at an Info Session and/or send us an email to [Admissions@MillFalls.org](mailto: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.

Our families have completed the **‘Intent to Return’ form** (which asks about their enrollment plans for their children for next year) and nearly all have said they will be returning. Experience tells us that we can expect that some will change their plans as the new school year draws closer.

#### **Human Resources:**

For a few days this month, we actually were close to having the number of paras we need. Unfortunately, one of our wonderful paras must resign due to health issues. **Please continue to spread the word - we are still looking for additional paraprofessionals and subs!**

A reminder that each year we distribute contracts for the upcoming school year the Friday before April Vacation. If you know people interested in working with us NEXT year, please also direct them to [hr@millfalls.org](mailto:hr@millfalls.org) or to Laura and me directly. Thank you!

#### **Financial**

Our auditor has sent along the draft **FY21 Audit** which will soon be reviewed. Once completed, it will be made available to the Board and sent to the DOE and posted on our website.

**Special Education** reimbursements from sending districts continue to arrive in a timely manner.

#### **MFCS Community Building & Volunteerism**

This month, one of our graduates, now in high school, is running a **Virtual Art Club for our Upper Elementary Students**. It is wonderful to have her mentorship to share with our students – this is the second time she has done this! Thank you, Zoe Henry-Hughes!

Our school needs - be they for the Food Pantry, paper towel requests or even some staff pick-me-ups - have been generously provided by members of our Mill Falls Community. We have such a great community. Staff also has reinstated our regular community lunches – a small group of us get together to make lunch for the full staff. It’s always a love-filled and delicious lunch; something we all look forward to.

It is our hope that later this spring we will be able to welcome back individual volunteers to work inside the school – though likely not directly with children – to help teachers produce materials, help organize our library, and other such needs. The timing of that will of course link to our work with the Manchester Health Department as we continue to evaluate COVID mitigation measures.

#### **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:**

The Foundation **currently holds** \$512,967 in its accounts.

We are waiting to hear from

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