



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 October 18, 2023 @ 6pm

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

- a. Meeting came to order at 6:07pm, called by Chair Dalton.
- b. Present: Dalton, Levin, Trombley, Bashier, Bee, Hollingworth; Corriveau and Butterfield, virtually.
- c. No public present.

2. Meeting Business

a. Approval of Minutes from September 2023 meeting

Motion: Trombley moved to approve the August 2023 minutes (with the typo correction of end of school time); Bashier seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous approval.

3. Montessori Moment: Colleen Costa, Upper Elementary Lead Teacher in the Zion Room shares a lesson using the Montessori Latitude and Longitude Board

4. School Reporting

a. Educational Program Director (Wrubleski):

Wrubleski noted that our afterschool clubs have begun – Fit Club is currently running and we began the year with our Conditioning Club in preparation for the Family Fun Run / 5K.

She noted that 5 of our students took part in the annual Delta Dental Student Leadership Summit and that the group will soon be sharing their proposed project with Laura and she expects the group will work throughout the year to bring their ideas to fruition.

Wrubleski shared that the teaching staff had a recent professional development day with Demonstrated Success where they worked on data management and analysis of SAS results. This gave our teachers time to reflect on what's working and what needs attention. We then spent time thinking about next steps. We are considering other ways to work with Demonstrated Success and hope to host additional professional development work with that team. The costs of working with them are covered by the Charter School Program Grant being administered by the DOE's Charter School Office.

Wrubleski noted that this week has been all about Internal Assessments. We are utilizing the new assessment system by Renaissance, which is on computer, but also still working with some of our paper-based assessments (running records which is a 1:1 assessment in reading) as well. Wrubleski is interested in comparing results this first year as she and team makes the transition to the new assessment tool.

b. Executive Director (Levin, *please also see attached report*)

Levin noted that the Board can stay aware of upcoming school events via the newsletter and her reports as you look for activities you can join. Upcoming events include Reading Under the Stars (10/25, 5:30-7) and Harvesting Our Stories: an exercise in building empathy, understanding and community through sharing our personal stories. She also mentioned the Student Leadership Summit which she was able to attend in part, and how much she enjoyed seeing our students out in the world. The event organizer wrote a beautiful email acknowledging the Mill Falls Students' poise, focus and kindness. She also mentioned that banking changes have been moving forward with the majority of our funds now with the Bank of New England and the rest will follow in the coming weeks as auto-drafts and paperwork for the state deposit system is changed to reflect the new banking relationship.

7. Program:

a: Communications: Levin reminded the Board that they may choose to use What’s App or texting as reminders of meetings and such, but can’t discuss Board business except at official meetings, or directly with Levin in her role as ED. She asked them to check the website and make sure their Bios are up to date. And reminded folks that they need to access and utilize their Mill Falls Email for school / Board business. She will assist anyone this coming week who needs help accessing it. Our IT guru, Jen Blake can also help folks as needed.

b: Committee Goal Setting: Finance, Governance, Mission & Charter

The Board broke into small groups, determined by Committee to work on their Goal Setting for this school year. The results are as follows as share din the report out:

Finance:

Complete changes to investment opportunities of the school's holdings
Review Financial Policies (which have not been reviewed since 2015)
Investigate Loan options for facilities: work with Will and Roland to imagine options
Facility & Capacity: Consider new or expanded facility & Assess impacts of potential growth and changing dynamics - resources needed
Generate and Support Ideas for replenishing holdings... fundraising... grants, events...
Plans to meet every other month; dates and times TBA

Governance:

Recruitment: The governance committee will focus on onboarding 1-2 new board members in the 23/24 year. This includes: meeting with potential new members (and informing current board members of this meeting in case they want to attend) , informing them about the board, presenting new members to existing board, and eventual onboarding them if it is a good fit (which includes them coming to a public meeting).
Board Engagement: The governance committee will work with school leadership and Demonstrated Success to put together a January retreat that will encompass problem / challenge statements, reaffirmation of board member commitments and contributions.
By-Law Review: including leave, among other items to add
Plans to meet quarterly; dates and times TBA

Mission & Charter:

Relationships with community supporters to understand the school and support. partnerships. This will impact family engagement, hiring, and should focus on connecting with other districts when possible.
Identify barriers that directly impact the mission of the school i.e.,...how the school is seen by the MSD, why it is so difficult to work with MSD and MTA, and what we can do to make our relationships with them more effective
Strengthen BOT knowledge around charter legislation (Levin to assist)
Plans to meet at 8:15 at school: dates and times TBA.

8. Next Meeting: **Wednesday, November 15, 2022** @ 6pm (Dalton 2 min)

9. 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)

10. Adjournment:

Time: 7:42pm

Motion: Trombley moved to adjourn; Bee seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous approval.



**Executive Director's Report
For the October 18, 2023
MFCS School Board Meeting
Submitted by Meryl Levin**

Ongoing Emergent Bus Issue

Since our last meeting, no progress has been made on the restart of reasonable and student-healthy bus routes. In fact, it has been radio-silent from the District, other than to say that they are doing background checks and hiring new drivers hope to have something in place that resembles past year routes but it could take a month to 3 months. That was nearly a month ago...

In the meantime, we have extended our day to try to help out our bus families. Our doors are open to them for drop off beginning at 8am (the last 15 minutes of our before care program) and we have staff we are paying to stay with the children from 3-4pm. We are charging the families \$5 daily for this service. We continue to have staff members and families leaning in to drive students to and from school when bus families can't manage to do so.

Required Reporting

We have completed the following beginning of the year has many reporting requirements from the DOE, these include:

DOE-25 Form which has now been completed and filed; **Free & Reduced Report; Immunization Report; BOY (Beginning Of the Year) Pupil Report; as well as several staff related surveys.** Also as required, our **English Language Learners** have been assessed a certified ELL educator to identify those who qualify for services this year.

Our **2022/23 Emergency Response Plan (ERP) has been filed with NH Homeland Security**, and as of this writing, the Signature page has been signed by school personnel, our Board Chair and I'm waiting for the return of that page from the other required signatories - both the Manchester Fire and Police Departments. We have already activated our annual safety schedule related to staff prep and drills. As many of you are aware we got to practice our Secure Campus Drill last week when we were notified that there was a bobcat on campus. We spoke to and were visited by Animal Control and then were able to release from secure campus and return to normal at about 12 noon. As is our protocol, an all-school alert was announced in the building, an alert was sent out via ALMA to parents/guardians, and the Board's Officers were also notified, both of the start of the Secure Campus and once it was lifted.

I have been working with all of our sending district to meet the design of a new law this year that requires that all districts and charter schools with shared Special Education Students create a Memo of Understanding (**MOU**) that maps out their agreement with regard to service provision. It has been quite time consuming, as none of the agreements are the same – we have 6 different sending districts that we work with in this way currently. As you recall, I sent out a draft agreement in August to each of them. I await just one more agreement, and hope that will be completed this coming week. Each MOU is then to be filed with the DOE's Special Education Department.

Board Related

Looking forward to taking a portion of our October Meeting for Committee time. Below is the information sent out after our last Board Meeting. Please be sure to come to the meeting prepared to help your committee prioritize its goals for the year:

In preparation for those planning meetings: You have been previously provided with an email containing link to the Committee Priorities Doc (a Google Doc) which you can explore ahead of time. The first tab describes how to use the doc, and a reminder you don't have to be on a

committee to make a suggestion for that committee. You will see there is some data already entered to get us going, and from past priority work.

2023/24 Committee Assignments:

- **Governance:**
Sara, Naomi, Danielle (with Mer as needed)
- **Finance:**
Jeff, Garth, Mer, and Heather (this is her only Board-related work this year, as she has stepped down)
- **Charter & Mission:**
Amy, Hind, Mer (with Laura as needed)

There are a few other Board-related items that need attention:

- If you have not reviewed your **website bio**, please do, and let me know of any changes. You can view it here: <https://millfalls.org/about-us/mill-falls-school-board/>
- We will again be discussing **board email use** at the meeting in October.

Facility & Wellness

Happy to report that we have not had to contract with Burke over the last few weeks, and expect that the cool crisp weather will mean we are out of the woods on indoor humidity for now.

MFCS Child Care Program

Our **Before Care Program** is running smoothly. It is being staffed by 3 members of our Mill Falls Staff, and runs daily, during school days, from 7-8:15am. There are currently 12 students enrolled daily, leaving some room for drop in as needed.

Enrollment

We welcomed a new student this week after Grace Eaton, our Project Manager, filled the spot left empty after a new student withdrew. We are already getting inquiries about the 2024 Lottery.

Financial

Banking Update: I'm please to share that we have begun to move funds from the Bank of NH to the Bank of New England, our new banking partner. To date, \$800,000 has been moved. The rest will follow as we continue to move automatic payments to the new bank, finalize paperwork with the state about our direct deposit information for title, federal and per-pupil fund deposits, and watch for past checks to clear. The Finance Committee with Sara Bee will soon be meeting with Katie Geery at Ameriprise, to discuss investment options for the funds that will live outside of our regular banking. Katie has been in Europe for several weeks since our first discussion.

Special Education: We have established contracts with the current sending districts who have resident students enrolled at Mill Falls. Invoices for September services provided have now been sent to each of the sending districts. The budget to actual for FY24, includes payments made by districts that arrived after the close of our last fiscal year, but were reimbursements for last school year.

Friday Program: This great program raises a small amount of funds each year for our school, and is in full swing. We so appreciate our program partner with **Pizza Man** on East Industrial Drive.

Audit: Our auditor now has all the FY 22 paperwork and our QuickBooks file as per his request. We await word on other specific receipts/records he will request for the **FY23 Audit**. Once completed, our audits are sent to the DOE and posted on our website.

Title Funds: I continue to request reimbursement for those Title Funds we are accessing this year (I for Upper Elementary Intervention; II for Professional Development; III for ELL Supports; IV for various applications). This week we learned of the **rollover for our Title I** which funds our Upper Elementary Interventionist. Once again the 2024 allotment along with our rollover funds from last year will more than cover her salary.

ESSER Funds: I continue to request reimbursement for funds spent as part of our COVID/ESSER III funding. We are moving quickly to bring us up to date on that grant. As reported earlier, we have re-designed some of our initial planning from 2021 to better reflect our growing and changing needs. The grant information uploaded to the DOE site over the summer will serve us well this year as we request reimbursement for past allowable expenses, and work through our plan of fund usage this year. ESSER III in total for us at \$160,005.12. This grant closes out on Sept 30, 2024.

MFCS Community Building & Volunteerism

Read Ins are back and we have had wonderful attendance this past Friday, our first of 2nd the 023/24 school year. Each Friday, parents/guardians/friends are invited to selected classrooms to read for 30 minutes with their children from 8:15-8:45am. If any of you would like to swing by for a Read In, please let us know. There are always children who don't have adults visiting.

We held our second **monthly Family Engagement Meeting** last week, and were joined by 9 parents/guardians who bring great energy and ideas to these discussions. We began by looking at past structures to support organizing community engagement and then also discussed upcoming events. As you are aware, we have a robust Community Engagement Calendar this year with events each month that are designed to bring our community together. Some will be created and led by our staff, others, we hope, will be led by Committee members. We made a few great decisions related to structure and communication they include:

- Determining Co-Chairs for the Family Event Committee and the Hospitality Committee.
- Those Chairs will be reaching out to our community to introduce themselves, determine meeting times and committee goals.
- The introduction of the 'Volunteer Corner' in our weekly newsletter that will note short and long-term volunteer opportunities with easy links using 'SignUp' to make it really easy for folks outside the committees to lend a hand and get involved.

As we've discussed, it is our hope that **Board Members will find ways to join us at some of this year's family social and curricular events.** Each of you receive the weekly Newsletter which is a great way to stay connected to the calendar of events, and overall school news.

An upcoming event you may enjoy... **Reading Under the Stars: Family Book Night Wednesday, October 25th from 5:30-7pm.** Mill Falls Families and friends are invited to bring your camping chairs and join us for hot chocolate, smores, and time with friends!

This coming week, our Equity, Social Justice & Belonging Learning Group will be meeting to organize our November event, **Harvesting Our Stories: An exercise in building empathy, understanding & community.** Stay tuned for more info, including the event date.

The Family Fun Run / 5K was truly a crowd pleaser and was very well attended. Final numbers are in and the run generated \$3836 (this does not include donated water, food, DJ, or donated prizes for top 5K finishers). After expenses (which included professional timing company, t-shirts, fun run club which is offered for free but staff is paid, and some materials) we raised \$2420 in fundraised dollars. The income is largely made up of sponsorship as we aim to keep the charge to participate very reasonable for families. We are deeply appreciative to all who sponsored the run, and of course to our generous hosts at SNHU. We look forward to doing it all again next fall!

This month, a small group of our Upper Elementary students participated in the **International Peace Summit and 14th Delta Dental Student Leadership Summit.** Both of these are led by Jay Bonsigl and provide our students with important time to develop their leadership skills. I once again had the pleasure of being part of both of these events, and am so proud of the students and so appreciative that our staffer, Mindy Kacavas led our group of students at the Leadership Summit held in Concord. There we joined 4 other schools in that 2-day workshop and the students are now charged with creating a follow up project that will benefit our school. Stay tuned for details!

On the heels of the long weekend, we jumped right into our **All-School Service Day at the NH Food Bank**. For so many in our community, it was their first time experiencing this engaging and meaningful morning. We haven't been able to do the Mac N Cheese Pack since 2019! Joined by a wonderful group of parent volunteers, we split the children into three groups, walking each over the other Food Bank, spending about an hour packing up the meals, and then heading back to school. The children and their attending adults worked with great gusto and determination. Their energy really paid off... together Mill Falls packed 1573 Mac 'N Cheese dinners for our food insecure neighbors! We were told that provides approximately 9,438 meals!

Mindy also took our **ELL students on a field trip** to a local Apple Orchard this week. Part of her work with our English Language Learners is to familiarize them with typical American English language and community activities.

As you know, I serve on the Board of the **NH Alliance for Public Charter Schools**. Along with the DOE, we co-hosted the recent Charter School Conference which was held in Concord. There were several workshops at the two-day event, including those led by members of the Demonstrated Success team, an organization that works closely with schools around organizational structure, leadership and accountability related to student success. Danielle and I have been in touch with **Karen Matso, Professional Development Director at Demonstrated Success**, about a potential Board workshop. We will be having a follow up meeting with Karen in November with a goal of planning a Board retreat for early January.

Human Resources

COVID and some other non-COVID illnesses have impacted our staff attendance a bit so far this year. We are so very fortunate that our staff steps up to help out those whose teaching or team partners are out. Our amazing staff has showed incredible grace and flexibility by leaning in to support one another and our students.

Foundation News: The Foundation awaits the funds from the treasury bonds they have recently held. Those will be deposited into the Foundation's Merrill Lynch – a higher interest bearing account than the Bank of NH offered.

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