

Washington Montessori Open Session Minutes Spring Board Retreat

Recorded by: Sharon H. Main

Date: February 25-26, 2011

Attendees: Board of Trustees members and ex-officio members

✓ Katrina Briley (Chair)	✓ Priscilla Denney	✓ Treva Maxwell-Anderson
✓ Rachel Midgette (Treasurer)	✓ Lisa Lawless	✓ Steve Jones (HoS)
✓ Jerry Vick (Secretary)	✓ Darwin Woolard	✓ Angi Bosso (Faculty Rep)

Call to Order	4:46pm (Darwin, Jerry and Treva absent at the start but joined the meeting as noted in the minutes below.)
Mission Statement	Lisa Lawless
Friday, Feb 25th	
MPTO Report	<p>Report: Given by Steve Jones.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goose Creek Scavenger Hunt to be held for the first time March 5th. 107 participants signed up. Elizabeth Oliveira is contact person. • March 7th is Pizza Inn Night. School will receive a percentage of sells. • April 4th - 8th Scholastic Bookfair. Jill Naberhaus and Angi Antrican are co-chairing. • Friday, April 15th is KidsFest. Dori St. Amant and Allison Harris are co-chairing. • MPTO elections will be held at May 12th Community Meeting. • Field Day will be held on the last day of school. <p>MPTO is not affiliated with PTA/PTO National Organizations primarily because WMPCS does not charge a fee to our parents to belong. Everyone in our school community is a member of the MPTO no membership form or fee required.</p> <p>Account Information: See enclosure. Auction money is not included. Current balance \$9,152.49 at First South Bank. Two Wachovia CD's \$10,535.93 (12 month term) and 5,184.03 (5 month term). Both have rolled over. Auction funds will be earmarked for awnings. Expenses and deposits are typical for MPTO.</p> <p>Bylaws: See enclosed copies: a draft of the new bylaws and a list of changes made to bylaws. A committee was formed: Ginger Gardiner, Dori St. Amant, Scott Clayton, Elizabeth Oliveira, Lee Ann Del Monte, and Steve Jones. Main goals were to have MPTO bylaws coincided with the BoT bylaws and to have a clear conflict resolution plan. PTO had been dissolved last year to eliminate a conflict with the upcoming president. Steve has headed up MPTO this year. Discussion held. BoT members will review the changes and will vote on the MPTO bylaws at the next meeting. BoT asked for the committee to review holding meetings off campus. Guidelines for fundraising reviewed. Steve must approve fundraisers along with the BoT. The Blueprint defines what is used as fundraisers. The MPTO committee has done a great job on the new MPTO bylaws.</p>
Blue Print	<p>Visual: Rachel presented. See enclosed booklet. Possibility of new logo discussed. Current logo is pink tower with globe and children. Mascot is the Eagle. Edits are needed to reflect what the school currently has in place. Discussed removing the title of blueprint and adding Montessori information like the Montessori model to make the booklet into a marketing tool. BoT members are to review the booklet and email ideas or changes to Rachel. ECU marketing department may be an option to help with enhancing the logo and marketing. Website discussed. Current website is 5 years old. May want to outsource it. BoT is interested in new marketing strategies.</p>
Best Practices/ Working Document	<p>Building an Operational Guide: Rachel is working on this. It should help new BoT members understand what takes place during a year serving on the Board. Items like the BoT's role in the Faculty Holiday Party, when the chair of the BoT votes, etc. Discussed adding more community education on the purpose, procedures and vision. This could be done as a "Board Minute" at Community meeting, however, BoT meetings must remain the business of the school and be held in a business meeting format.</p> <p>Meeting recessed for dinner.</p> <p>Darwin and Treva joined the meeting. Meeting resumed 7:50pm.</p> <p>Discussion held to catch Darwin and Treva up on what has been discussed to this point.</p>

	Decided to keep the Blue Print booklet as is and then modify the booklet to be a separate marketing tool that would be dated and reviewed annually. MPTO Bylaws question about not allowing meetings off campus discussed again. Convenience for faculty members to attend must not be forgotten since it is a Parent Teacher Organization. Keeping meetings at the school allows for more transparency. If the community needs an alternative it should come to MPTO, BoT and Mr. Jones to approve.
Montessori Information	Normalization: See handout. Katrina explained how the child reaches a joy and purpose in learning through his/her class work. Some children reach it earlier than others and it rises and falls in the classroom throughout the year. Normalization was one of the most important aspects of the method according to Maria Montessori. You must have the child, the environment, and the teacher to make the method work smoothly and seamlessly. Normalization is a lifelong process. Discussion about how to get an older student to normalize coming into a 4 th grade or higher class. Summer classes could be added to help. Discussion held regarding the teachers role in the classroom. It is the teacher's job to make the classroom work, to observe the child in his/her natural state, and make adjustments to reach the child. BoT has to make sure the class size is a number that the classroom can hold comfortably and meet the Montessori method of learning. Steve shared that in polling the classrooms they average being 86% normalized. This includes new students.
Long Range Planning	1, 3, and 5 year plans: See enclosed projected enrollment form. Enrollment discussed. Class Sizes (Current and Future): WMPCS can have 310 students per DPI for the 2011-12 school year. Discussion held on enrollment cap. BoT wants to see data on withdrawn vs. added students. Copies of paperwork where WMPCS has submitted for increased enrollment to be added to BoT binders. Climate Survey (aid in development): See copy of Comment Themes (a summary from the survey conducted this year.) Discussed teachers attending the same center for training and forming a grant writing team. Austin Smigel and Priscilla Denney are a resource for grant writing. Adding the Multi-purpose room or a high school goes back to budget and is not feasible at this time. Steve is educating the community about budget restraints. Parking lot safety discussed. Kids are to stay on the sidewalks and crosswalks.
Public Comments	None.
	Darwin moved to recess the meeting until tomorrow. Lisa 2nd. All in favor.
	Saturday, Feb 26th
Faculty Report	Angi Reported. 9-12 level would like a copier in their building. 12-15 level would like a teacher assistant. Middle Schools typically have specialized teachers, for WMPCS the subjects are split between two teachers. They have a mentor but she is specifically assigned to one student. 6-9 level has concerns about their new building. Heating system does not function properly, two rooms have lighting problems, laminate is pulling off of the cubbies and one classroom has a leaky window. Rachel mentioned using a charting machine that will give a read out of the actual temperatures. Class size is also a concern for 6-9 level. Teachers have expressed both sides, an understanding of the need to have an extra class vs. not opening the classroom due to budget issues. Montessori says that each child needs 35 sq ft per classroom. The 6-9 level has 922 sq ft per class. This will accommodate 26 students per class. Classes are currently 24-26 students. 3-6 level has a concern about allowing the students to enroll after the first 20 days. Feels that the classroom normalization process is compromised. Jill Gaddy, 3-6 teacher, spoke about the ratio of age groups in the classroom being unbalanced. Needs an equal blend of 3, 4, and 5 year olds. WMPCS has only been taking pre-k for 7 years. 3-6 level would like to know that a plan is in place to get the ratio closer to the Montessori model of 8 three year olds, 8 four year olds and 9 Kindergarteners per class and also, have a policy that students who withdraw would not be replaced after first 20 days of school. Pre-k students are not guaranteed a Kindergarten slot thru the lottery. Enrollment needed to fill first grade is an issue if only 27 Kindergarteners are taken in. Currently enrolling 51 Kindergarteners. It is preferable to bring in 3-6 students to build up the foundation of the school. Steve has spoken to Sterling Montessori (another public Montessori school) they

	<p>have the same problem. Gaddy stated there is not enough time to meet the Kindergarten needs before promoting them up to 6-9 level. Dynamics of the classrooms discussed. The perfect model would force WMPCS become a licensed daycare and we would lose some of the Montessori philosophy to meet the state guidelines. This has been explored before. Staggered start is used to slowly introduce the Montessori program to Kindergarteners. Retained Kindergarteners have moved mid-year and this can disrupt 6-9 level. Gaddy explained that the plain of development changes for those that are retained and they can become a behavior problem and may to not be able to interact with the 3 and 4 year olds. State funds are based on enrollment on the 20th day of school. Local funds are paid monthly or quarterly based on enrollment. Preschool has greatly improved this year. Program had a rocky start but with new staff, classroom set up, and the director being on campus things are running much smoother.</p>
Policy Changes	<p>Jerry Vick joined the meeting. See enclosure. Only 3 changes are being considered at this time. Personnel Manual under section 1.1.1 remove the word "normally". Parent Handbook section Applications/Lottery/Enrollment clarify that lottery will be held at the January BoT meeting. Create a Lost and Found policy that will not hold the school liable for items that are lost or found. BoT recommends adding the lost and found policy to both Personnel Manual and Parent Handbook. Students signing out early discussed. No policy change recommended at this time. Policies of other schools discussed. BoT will vote on policy changes at the next meeting.</p>
Charter School Legislation	<p>See enclosure: Senate Bill 8. Copies of the Charter Voice magazine shared too. Reviewed the new bill. The creation of a Charter School Commission is included. Lottery money is being released that will be able to go toward building expenses. Discussion held on various sections for clarity of what will occur if this bill passes. The bill has passed the Senate and is headed to the NC House of Representatives. The Governor has the final approval.</p>
Accounting and Auditing Services	<p>Acadia: Flat fee instead of % of Grants: Grants that are filed by Acadia will now cost us a flat rate for \$450 dollars for the year for an unlimited amount of grants. Using different Service Providers (Accounting and Auditing) Steve has researched auditors and accounting firms. Acadia costs approx: \$36,000. Current contract runs through next school year. Other possibilities for accounting service will be explored before the contract renews. Other schools use ISIS software for in-house accounting. Steve will check to see if Acadia assumes liability in their contract. Black Auditing firm costs \$9,300 per year currently. Petway, Mills and Pearson has made an offer of \$7,000 per year for a 3 year contract for a full audit with filing the 990 for an additional \$1,000. Discussion held to negotiate the cost of filing the 990.</p>
Budget Review	<p>Fundraising (The role and how it can benefit WMPCS): See fundraising sheet. Capital Campaign revisited. How to do it and who will chair it discussed. If it has an environmental aspect PCS Phosphate would be a great resource. Priscilla would assist with this. Need to determine exactly what the money would be used for. Other items that would be nice to have include a sign on 264 with directions on how to access the campus. Discussion returns to marketing. Community needs a chance to give input this could be done via the MPTO blog. Charter Lawsuit money due NC Charter Schools: WMPCS has received \$21,850.71 from Washington County (paid in two payments. Paid 1st half still owes \$10,925.35), \$75,698.02 - Pit County, \$19,331 - Martin County. Craven County is now offering to pay the \$7,674.00 they owe. Beaufort County owes \$231,804. Loss of Stimulus Funds: \$131,000 in federal stimulus money is no longer available. BoT recessed for lunch 12:06 noon. Returned to open session 1:20pm. 10% and 15% cuts: First budget copy shows 15% cuts without any cuts. At the top of the budget shows total number of student enrollment and Exceptional Children served. Note the change in student revenue would be going from \$4,635.78 to \$3,940.42. Mentor salary is covered by PRC 114. EC salaries are IDEA(060) and IDEA (144). Stimulus money is no longer available and was called Stabilization Funds(140) and Education Jobs Funds (155). Field Trips is the donation from MPTO for fieldtrip scholarships. See enclosed adjustments noted on budget sheet. Memberships discussed. MPTO covered the cost of belonging to Chamber of Commerce and Charter School Alliance and the initial set up for the AlertNow system. The</p>

	<p>school will now pay for these costs. Added AlertNow phone notification system as a line item. Adjusted line items for Equipment cost to cover laminator expenses. Discussion held regarding costs for Encore and other contracted services. EC services such as speech and occupational therapy (OT) must be provided by the school to meet student IEP's. Teacher training discussed. Online training has been tried but is not an outstanding program. BoT and administration would like to return to training only at the centers. Discussed the costs of training. Steve has already been approached by a teacher assistant who would like to be trained. Added \$4,500 to the training line item to cover the cost of two years of training for the assistant starting next year. Darwin reminded everyone that a charter school conference is available in Raleigh the end of July first of August. Attendance is free for any charter board member they just need to register. Discussed training teachers in computer skills such as EXCEL. Ongoing Board training was discussed. AMS Conference has been attended by BoT members in the past. This year Steve and Dale will attend. Advertising discussed. Bumped advertising to \$5,800. Reviewed facilities costs. Costs under debt service cannot be adjusted. Discussed possibly getting free internet service from Century Link. Darwin will investigate. Second budget with 10% and cuts handed out. Art removed and Encore taken down to 4 days. Remediation teacher taken down to 4 days. When removing cuts it changes the bottom line to a \$25,953.95 deficit. This could be able to be offset with Sugar Creek lawsuit money to balance the budget. This budget does not include the salary for a 12-15 teacher assistant. Hoping to get a free employee from vocational Rehab or Job Links program. WMPCS will not have any concrete figures until July or August of 2011 from the State. 3rd Budget with 7% cuts handed out. Without cuts the budget ends with \$19,374.25 positive. If this is the case the BoT would like to go back to not enrolling students after the first 20 days. Looking at adding the 5th 6-9 classroom. Waitlist viewed. There is a waitlist for every grade for the 2011-12 school year. Discussed how to breakdown the 3, 4, and 5 year olds to be balanced model. Lottery does not guarantee enrollment for charter school for pre-k students. The preschool room will not hold more than 15 afternoon students. BoT recommended taking 19 Kindergarteners at the beginning of the year and 6 preschoolers for a total of 25 students. 1. Creates a cushion of student loss. 2. Meets teacher request of not taking students after the 20th day. 3. Meets current facility capabilities. BoT asked to have monthly balance sheets as opposed to quarterly. Steve will request more information from Acadia. Steve stated that a statement of cash accounts can be reported every month. BoT would like to see more budget information earlier in the school year to keep focused on the vision.</p>
Board Growth	<p>Committees: See handout titled Committees at WMPCS. This includes excerpts from the Parent Handbook and BoT bylaws. Lisa spoke to having set committees to serve the community. This will help keep the same parents that volunteer from being burned out. Committees could include facilities (growth and building), marketing (re-branding) and 5 year planning. Guidelines would be needed to make sure the committee functions. Lisa will draft the guidelines and bring to the BoT.</p> <p>Board Structure (Community and Self Perpetuating) Handout includes excerpt from the bylaws and definition of the terms. The question in the community was to find out why the Community elected member cannot vote on the self-perpetuating member. Treva recalled not being given the nomination forms at the time of the vote for the self-perpetuating seat. Katrina stated that she was following a process and did not realize that Treva had felt excluded. The community wants to keep the community elected seats. The history of the community elected seat was recalled. The first community elected member served as chair of the board. The self-perpetuating seats keep the vision of the school so that elected members are not put in by community members with specific agendas that would cause us to go off track. Treva wants smoother transition onto the BoT for the next community elected members. The only difference in the seats is that only self perpetuating members can select other self perpetuating members. Katrina stated that as chair of the BoT she worked very hard during the last community election to bridge any gaps between the two different types of members. Discussion held.</p> <p>Activity - BoT played Guesstures as a wind down activity. BoT recessed until the next day. 10:42pm.</p>
Sunday, Feb 27th	BoT resumed 8:32am
	Steve handed out 2 sheets with estimates of cost for the new 6-9 classroom. He would need to add 2 assistant teachers and additional students for the classroom to open. DPI

	will only allow us to grow to 310 students next year. This makes it impossible to open the new class for the 2011-12 year. The additional classroom was not factored in to the budgets shared yesterday. Discussion held regarding how many students should ideally be in each classroom vs. parent and teacher perception. Educating the parents on the Montessori model should help them understand that the classroom size is intentional to meet the model. Classroom will possibly open in 2012-2013.
Closed Session Minutes Security	See handout that defines "closed session" and has information from DPI along with the schools process to keep the minutes secure. Closed session is to be attended by voting members, anyone who needs to address the board and sometimes a clerk. There has never been a breach of security. Jerry is the secretary currently with Sharon as a designee. Rachel is concerned more about there being a breach if there were to be changes in personnel. Discussion returned to how to handle distributing the closed session minutes. No closed session minutes have been sent electronically. Treva removed the request to have the minutes emailed. Katrina discussed the accidents that had happened in the past with email and wanted the board to be aware of how accidents can happen if closed session minutes leave the meeting even in paper format. Everyone should be able to get the minutes for professional reasons. BoT agrees that if someone misses a meeting they can drop by the Administrative Office for a copy or can have them mailed to them via US mail. Certified mail is not deemed necessary at this time. Treva requested that she would like to have the minutes mailed to her for any meeting that she is absent from.
BoT Calendar	BoT revisited the calendars in the BoT binders. BoT would like to have planning reflected earlier in the year. Currently the BoT discusses this at retreats and in the summer. Focus to be on planning and vision at retreat. Special speakers have come to the retreat in the past. BoT would like to have Acadia or the auditor come. Fall retreat could be held on a Saturday to give more time and add more budget discussion.
Review BoT HoS Evaluation Process	Evaluation form is new as of last year. BoT wants it to become an action plan that Steve and the BoT could use as a tool. In May the BoT voting members and the HoS receive the form. In June the BoT members turn in the forms to the chair. Chair tallies the responses and in July at closed session without the HoS present the results are discussed. Chair sets a date to meet with the HoS to give him a compiled evaluation and discuss the results. Steve likes the current form it is more information than he is used to. Steve likes the process and the way our staff and students are all allowed to evaluate themselves. Steve will do a goal sheet at the beginning of the year to share with the BoT in August. BoT discussed having an online calendar. Priscilla can help set this up. The BoT will also have goals themselves. Steve shared some information regarding the quotes for awnings. Auction did not raise enough money to cover the cost of awnings. BoT wants to put the money back on the table for the community to pick another use.
Public Comments	None.
Closed Session	Darwin made motion to go to closed session at 10:10am pursuant to Confidential 143-318.11 (a)(5) and Personnel 143-318.11(a)(6). Rachel 2nd. All in favor. Treva made motion to come out of closed session at 11:05am. Darwin 2nd. All in favor.

Motion by Darwin to adjourn at 11:10am. Jerry 2nd. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted by: Sharon H. Main
February 25-26, 2011
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Accepted
Washington Montessori Public Charter School