



Board of Directors
Board Meeting Minutes
October 8, 2020

Free Horizon Montessori PK – 8

Montessori for the 21st Century - a place to learn, a place to belong

1. Meeting called to order at: 6:11pm
 - a. Board Members Present: Alison Fuhr, Clark Frye, Doug Klof, Bekky Robbins, Leslie Arboleda, Diane Fox, John Frost
 - b. Board Members Absent (excused):
 - c. Staff Members Present: Kresta Vuolo, Cyndi, Donnetta McDonald, Vosburgh, Jennifer Levy, Kate Powell (Staff Liaisons) Ms. Lynne (librarian) Megan Wells
 - d. Guests: Tony Schiess (parent), Nicole Steinbach (parent) Jenna Layne (parent) April Couvillion (Parent), Alexa Metrick (parent?), Sarah Schnard (parent), Janka Bernard, Dianna Armentrout, Jill Fricker
 - e. CSN: None

2. Approval of Agenda (including item 3, Consent Agenda) for current meeting: motion to approve by John. Second by Doug. Leslie requests adding an update for the principal evaluation; Motion to approve: Doug, second by John.

4. FHM BOD Virtual Meeting Guidelines
 - a. As we have moved to virtual meetings, need to set structure and meeting protocol.
 - i. Guests sign in with their real name
 - ii. Video feed when possible
 - iii. Chat feature turned off, we are trying to focus on each topic at a time. Chat is not part of official board discussion and can feel as though two conversations are going on.
 - iv. Directors and guests asked to speak are encouraged to unmute and contribute to discussion, when invited.
 - v. In the board policy manual, it states that members of the public speak during public comment period, and otherwise act as meeting observers.
 1. Community has elected the board members; other members of the public can comment on agenda line-items during the public comment period. Not asking for public to sign up as Jeffco Board of Ed does.
 2. Allows for time to ensure all board members have an opportunity to discuss each line item.
 - b. Board meeting isn't time to dialogue with the BOD. Comments need to be in-line one of the agenda line-items, if it's not, we can talk as needed via email, or add for next month. Virtual coffees are also a good place to have a dialogue. Board meetings are time for the board to work through issues and make decisions.

5. Public Comment and Celebration

- a. Nicole Steinbach – parent, lives in community and sends kids to FHM. There have been a number of letters that have come in with personal stories, and it’s crushing to think that the teachers I’ve seen crying, the frustration in the parking lot in the evenings has this feeling to it. Really concerned and heart broken. Seen a lot of turn-over and want the community school to be a place to be listened to. Don’t want to lose more families.
 - b. Leslie Arboleda – praise to learning resource team, who have gone above and beyond to create some access points and support that meets the needs of remote kids.
 - c. Jill Fricker – I’m a little distressed, when I looked at the board agenda, and see how you have chosen to handle the emails that you have received. Distressed that we are trying to make a decision for our children for next year and doesn’t seem to be of concern. Never seen the board implement these public comments, timing is interesting, followed policy and now restricting us. Consider what you have heard and consider the evaluations and ask questions. You have a job, have been voted in, and is about children.
 - d. Tony Schiess – important to recognize the emotion present right now, and the fact that – we are talking about kids, and the heart and soul of what we are doing at the school. I would like to applaud everyone who has stepped up. This is what a board meeting should look like. If there will be delegations about when people will share, needs to be a clear format for parents to do that that is transparent, authentic. Thank you to everyone who has been willing to express their concerns. Should be encouraged. Thank you for your time. Suggestion: coffee chats shouldn’t be during work hours.
 - e. Megan Wells – CSN raised some funds for pencils to iPads – raised \$1700, thank you to community and CSN, really impactful. Lot of supplies. Very grateful to the CSN and everything they do.
 - f. Cyndi Vosburgh – grant that Jen Levy helped apply for, had a sustainability grant, we got a nice note from governor stating that we had received the award, \$3k towards BAC.
 - g. Bekky – Jeffco schools COVID dashboard, great resource. Also happy with timely district nurse follow-up for student’s absence due to possible COVID in other family members.
 - h. Janka Bernard – shocked that the board thinks that 10 minutes is enough time to discuss the letters sent to the board.
 - i. Kresta –
 - i. tardy arrivals have plummeted
 - ii. Thanks to CSN who supplied snacks for staff meeting
 - iii. Student success coach Mr. Jesse – led MAP testing efforts.
 - iv. Rachel Duncan – stepped in to create virtual library, delivering to in-person, coordinating remote student materials pick-up
 - v. Education assistants have been working incredibly hard. Supporting work cycles, additional health and safety responsibilities.
6. Staff liaison update
- a. Excited to get some training on new reading curriculum, which will begin implementation right after fall break. Nice to regroup with each other. Optimizing what we’ve learned

- b. Cyndi and facilities committees are spear-heading campus development plan. At old location, was focused on more space. In new facility, need a new plan. Improved playgrounds and courtyard. Opportunity for staff to have feedback, would eventually go out into community on what our hopes and dreams are for the facility.
- c. Classroom visits – Kate and Jen brainstormed dates, sent to staff, have had no feedback, will follow-up on that.

7. Principal Update

- a. Summer 2020 projects – district project manager oversees timing, anticipate that final punch-list items will be done soon.
- b. Chalk board removal/white board – some finishing items are needed, need consecutive days when children are not in the building
- c. Cubbies ordered and in production
- d. Campus development plan – staff will provide feedback
- e. Enrollment – came in at 349.56 FTE. Can still take preschoolers, have some vacancies, but in terms of count window, today was last day of count. This is ~35 FTE less than we had originally budgeted for.
- f. Families will have an opportunity Nov 9 - 14 to elect in-person or remote. Do have minimums in terms of space and desks, will be determined by numbers.
- g. Professional development day on October 15, will get training on new literacy curriculum. Staff will also have time to complete campus development plan input, will be given a financial update, have an opportunity to give input on further reductions.
- h. School counselor still posted – CDE, does allow someone a 1 year emergency endorsement if met all other requirements; can hire as long-term substitute position.
- i. COVID – health screenings going well, adjusted schedules to minimize cohort mixing, teachers using outdoor space as much as possible. Jeffco COVID dashboard is up, reflects cases of in-person students. Reflects previous days data. This afternoon, learned that Jeffco is updating quarantine and isolation protocols at secondary learning level (impacts middle school program).
- j. Resumed CSN/BOD/Principal meeting, have them on the calendar for the rest of the year to help coordinate support for one another.

8. Finance Update

- a. Had first updated budget read last month, hoping to do a second read today, but will be moved to next month. We had a budget going into this year, approved last spring, knew that we had to include revenue reduction, after \$500k in cuts, had proposed a first read last month, ~\$30k under revenue. With our enrollment FTE's, a couple of other factors, looking at \$185k deficit. Previously approved \$100k use of carry forward, so need to make \$85k further adjustments. Wanted to wait for final FTE before we do a second read of the budget. Now have to determine how to make up \$85k. Up to first reads, were no involuntary terminations or furloughs. May not be possible now. May need some deeper cuts to make up remaining difference.
 - i. Spread impact over many – each person feels less, or targeted impact, but will be felt bigger by smaller numbers of people, or combinations. Carry-forward in

the CR fund, brought in when we made the transition from Charter to Innovation. Working with JeffCo to analyze different funding accounts and see what options are available to us. Jeffco Board of Ed had projected 350 FTE lower, but actual number appears to be 4k lower.

- ii. Won't be moving funds from campus fund into general fund, but may be able to move some expenses in to the campus fund. Really strict guidelines about how we spend tax-payer and parent funded-funds. Working closely with internal auditor, accounting team.
- iii. Wanted to wait until staff could give input before 2nd presentation to the BOD. Will present 2nd read next month.

9. Emails sent to the Board of Directors

- a. Summary – over the last week, the BOD has received several letters from former and current community members about concerns that they have regarding an array of serious concerns. Everything we do drills down to the kids, it's why people are so passionate. When we get emails with concerns, we do not ignore them. They are highly confidential. Can not discuss them in this meeting because they are confidential. Acknowledge that we received them.
- b. Action - Each one will be reviewed individually and as a whole, what can we learn from the collective voice. We've received several letters, we have talked to Matt Walsh, who was on many of the letters, discussed with Kresta. Each letter will be addressed to ensure that policy was followed. In each of these instances, there's a concern. Summary will be provided to the full board. Want to stress that they have not been ignored. We cannot discuss the letters in the public meeting.
 - i. Kresta – have met with Alison and Matt Walsh. Looking at opportunities for learning and growth.
 - ii. Growth opportunity for the school to make our community better. BOD will need time to evaluate the situations and find the best path forward.
- c. Board expectations in response to these emails – we are a board of 7, we are not individually a board. We can't individually respond to these emails as a board. There is no set policy about response, official response should be what all of us agree it to be. Alison will respond until we have a collective answer. The conflict resolution process, starts with trying to resolve that conflict 1:1. As board members we should model that and promote that. We have responsibility as a board to get the whole picture, gather more data. Supporting conflict resolution protocols.
 - i. How do we create channels of back and forth with concerned community members? Involves confidentiality, need to know desired outcome. BOD needs to know the Conflict Resolution Policy.
 - ii. A gap between what the expectations for the response tonight vs. what happens. Public comment period may be unfulfilling when you come to the BOD meeting with concerns that you would like to voice. BOD does have legal obligations from solving these kinds of conflicts during a BOD meeting. Should we consider being flexible on inviting public input on agenda line-items (after BOD members have had a chance to comment), help to bridge that divide

between BOD members and community? We do have obligations as a BOD and the BOD regular meeting is not to dialog with the Board. Could we schedule a Town Hall style meeting where we do more active listening? Can have more of a reactive dialog with community members? Virtual Town Hall, next Mon, Tues, Wed 6-8pm. Kresta requests that Matt Walsh be able to attend.

- d. BOD Code of conduct – expectation as board members, that we have an obligation as board members that is different than if we are just a parent. From the board policy (Section 3.2): “Address issues and not personalities and not make disparaging remarks about other directors, administration, staff or community members...” obligation to build up the school. Also have to support *all* decisions of the BOD even if contrary to personal beliefs.

10. (Added) Principal Evaluation

- a. Matt Walsh - eager to get involved to help our school, supporting Kresta and through him, she has opportunities to tap in to other optional school resources. Will come next BOD meeting and talk about next steps. Will be district connection while we go through all of the emails that were sent.
- b. Kick-off next Thursday, teachers will have time to fill out the board-created survey that we have used for the past 3 or 4 years. Will come from Alison straight to the staff. Strictly anonymous, via survey monkey. Leslie and Alison will share results along with other data points later in school year.
- c. Selection of community that we interview, staff, parents, CSN president. Matt Walsh will give his professional perspective as well. Matt had some good ideas about additional data points (i.e. Make Your Voice Heard survey for students, TLCC for staff).

11. Communications to Community

- a. Virtual coffees, we will re-visit the time to make it more accessible to move them outside of normal working hours.
- b. Fox Flash update – maybe we should update the community before we have a finalized budget. Community may not be aware of how big the shortfall is. People need to know that enrollment is even lower than we had planned for. The more transparency the more folks step up to help. Need to be mindful of what we update, and that impacted parties aren’t being informed the first time via this update.
 - i. Probably not put the information into the Fox Flash before Professional Development Day when deficit will be discussed with the staff.
 - ii. Could be an update of just reduced FTE, gap may be long between introducing this deficit.
 - iii. If we give an update in the Oct 28 Fox Flash, will be after PD day and after finance committee can put together an update budget.
 - iv. Next week – link to Jeffco website that discusses the

12. AMS Accreditation/Innovation Plan

- a. Summary - Standard 1 AMS Step 7 – part of accreditation process, is to show that we have health, well-rounded school that is set up for the future. First step is do you have a

mission, do you follow it, how do you implement it. AMS Committee has given us the task of coming up to a thoughtful answer to Standard 1. We have a mission, how do we plan to implement that as a board?

- b. ASK: Need documentation for sections 1.1 – 1.7 – big part is the self-study. Self-study needs to include the current mission statement, description of the process used to formulate and review the school’s mission statement, description of how the school is achieving its mission and how it is working toward greater fulfillment of its mission. Review when we have our strategy session to ensure that the mission statement is still reflective of our school. Process used to formulate involved staff, community, BOD members.
 - i. How is the school achieving our mission?
 1. In the last few years, have reached goal of having Montessori credentialed teacher in each classroom. Continually growing our Montessori teacher pipeline.
 2. Grant and loan program to aid teachers in achieving credentialing.
 3. Collaborative – meeting the child where they are, have Learning Resource Team, have GT coordinator, means of supporting children with exceptional needs.
 4. Very high level of participation in parent/teacher conferences.
 5. Teaching about the world and geography
 6. Assistants in every classroom, teacher-student ratio
 7. Public school providing Montessori with a lottery system for enrollment (more diverse student BODY and community – inclusive of students and exposure to others of potentially different backgrounds)
 8. First Innovation school, leading the way for the district with a public Montessori option
 9. Tackled challenges of maintaining Montessori philosophy despite COVID-19 restrictions.
 - a. Still mix-aged classrooms, but we maintain cohorts
 - b. Keeping constructiveness theory central to lessons.
 - c. Not letting policies or procedures get in the way of what we need to do.
 - d. Primary example - Adjusting materials for easy cleaning, focusing on content
 10. Collaborative, peaceful environment – peace lessons from school counselor. Teachers do implement restorative practices, conversations about how we solve problems, what it means to be a friend, coming together when people have differences, etc.
 11. Safe environment – physical safety, teachers help build relationships and rapport between children.
 - ii. How do we as a board implement this mission?
 - iii. What makes us an excellent Montessori program?
 1. Truly come as you are school, broader spectrum of families that send their children to FHM.

2. Since we are public and not tuition-based makes a big difference in our community. A bit more structured than some other schools.
 3. Uphold academic standards that are put forward by district and state, and believe that students can achieve those standards via Montessori education.
 4. View of assessments, can utilize them to inform instruction.
 5. Board has subcommittees that involve staff, parents, community members
- iv. Review of school mission
1. Board in-person observation, seeing all types of classroom in one day gives perspective and informs how the school is doing in keeping with mission.
- c. Bekky will make a first draft of this response to circulate to the BOD to communicate thoughts.
 - d. Couple of discrimination clause issues – pregnancy, socioeconomic level, learning style, don't have these specifically called out. Could governance look at 1.2? Revise non-discrimination policy to cover everything that's needed. Leslie will take this to Governance to reconcile.
 - e. 1.3 – district publishes demographic data for entire district, not for specific schools. Potentially district dashboard that we could pull from.

13. FHM BOD Institutional Knowledge

- a. Did not review MAP at the SAC meeting, window actually ends tomorrow. Teacher's can access individual scores before window closes, but can't look at school-wide data until the window closes. Will circle back next month.

14. Update Principal Job Description

- a. Before we finalize, want to ensure we are in alignment with the Jeffco District Principal JD's for elementary and middle schools. Last updated 2012, still references 'head of school', some education requirements, etc. have changed. Also requirements that AMS holds that are not currently included in the principal JD.
- b. Board members to review the principal JD, and come with thoughts on how to update next meeting. Alison will add AMS principal requirements to SharePoint. Kresta will add principal JD's to SharePoint.

15. Assignments

- a. Staff liaisons will regroup with staff on possible board participation/observation dates
- b. Bekky will draft AMS response re: how school is achieving it's mission
- c. Leslie will discuss with Governance committee re: the alignment of our discrimination clause with that of AMS
- d. All BOD members will review the principal JD and come with thoughts on how to update it at next meeting; Alison will add AMS principal requirements to SharePoint, Kresta will add current principal JD's.

16. Adjournment at 9:36pm

- a. Motion to adjourn – John motions, Doug seconds
 - i. Unanimous approval. Next meeting November 12.

In accordance with the Colorado Open Meetings Law, also known as the Sunshine Law, the Board must give notice to the public anytime they schedule a meeting of more than three (3) board members to discuss business concerning the school. The Colorado Sunshine law does allow for the meetings, or portions of the meetings, to be held privately when the subject matter being discussed must remain confidential so long as no formal action is taken during the private portion of the meeting, called the "executive session". The Sunshine Law strictly defines eight (8) criteria under which a private executive session can be held, personnel discussion being one of them. The law also states the community must be informed of the meeting and the criteria under which an executive session must be called.

Bekky Robbins