

Laramie Montessori Board of Trustees
Regular Board Meeting – Minutes (Draft)
Location: Laramie Montessori Charter School Gym
Laramie, WY 82072

August 25, 2022
6:30 PM

I. Opening (6:30 pm)

Mission Statement: “The Mission of Laramie Montessori School is to support the development of the whole child through an authentic Montessori environment that honors the child’s intrinsic motivation to learn and supports each individual’s unique intellectual, physical, social and emotional development.”

Chair Emily read the mission statement and invited sharing of “15 second Montessori Moments”. Heidi shared that on this first half-day of school at LMCS started with a group session in the gym and the kids all settled themselves and did a great job paying attention. Heidi also shared that many in the LMCS community helped in taking care of her granddaughter today as she had her in her care for the morning. That speaks very well of the school. Jeff also shared that it was great to see all the kids excited for the start of school and coming in with enthusiasm. Emily also shared that it was great to see the older kids helping the littles coming in to school.

Emily introduced Amy to the new members of the Board – Richard and Shawn.

Approval of Agenda: Richard moved and Megan seconded that the agenda be approved as included in the packet. Passed unanimously.

II. Minutes

Megan moved and Amy seconded that the June 23, 2022 minutes be approved as submitted and included in the packet. Passed unanimously.

Megan moved and Rich seconded to approve the July 28, 2022 minutes as included in the packet. Passed unanimously.

III. Audience Communication I

Teacher Representative – Heidi Kindsvater indicated there were 19 survey results received from summer program families, all indicated that they would be interested in some sort of after school program like this again. It was very successful; the staff worked very hard and it went well.

Janelle Still (from the Zoom audience) agreed with Heidi that it was a great half-day back at school and that everyone was excited to be back.

IV. Reports

Director's Report:

Enrollment figures are a little lower than originally forecast, but close. Primary at 27 instead of 29 this morning. Two withdrew. Another pre-schooler had to withdraw because they did not get the scholarship or DFS funding they needed to be able to afford it. That took us down by two. But there were also three no shows. LMCS will follow district policy and drop them after 10 days if there is no communication and they do not show up.

Lower Elementary is down to 46 students (down by one). One family, from Jordan, had kids that had previously attended a Montessori school in Jordan. LMCS accepted both students.

86 students total. Makena at 21 students today. Kaylie at 23, Jenny at 21 today.

A couple of additional items to report: Maria Montessori's birthday is Wednesday, August 31st. Will have a celebration at the school. Students will make a collaborative fruit salad – kids cutting fruit (with help from parent volunteers). All are invited to join at 12:30 in the gym/cafeteria for the fruit salad and celebration.

Got a call from the National Alliance of Charter Schools from the person in the head office in Albuquerque, NM, who is the Wyoming rep. Wyoming is not big on charter schools – a new one starting in Casper and Gillette. This group is wanting to help boost support for charter schools in Wyoming. They will come and interview Jeff and another Charter School head in Cheyenne. They will come September 8th in the morning. Good PR for the school. Will give an update at next meeting.

Title Night – will have some sort of activity and a meal (Norman is good with getting donations from local businesses to support the meal). Love to have you join us September 8th from 5:30 to 7:30 pm.

Another event coming up: With COVID, haven't gotten the money or opportunity to send staff to as much training as we would like to. Will send all of our head teachers for training. LMCS Title funding has increased substantially. Funding comes from the Federal Government. Tied to numbers of families filling out the Title One paperwork, not the number actually receiving it. Most schools in the district have had their Title funds cut, but LMCS has grown. Also taking Heidi and the Special Education teacher. They will go to the breakout sessions and all the sessions that are there. Conference starts on September 22nd (there is a Board meeting that night, but Jeff will join from Estes Park so he can be with the staff for their training). Starts Thursday night and runs through the weekend.

Part of the plan is to get parents involved – had a great "Meet your Teacher" event turnout. The teachers were very happy with the turnout. Had a great first half-day today. Had one misplaced child at the dismissal – he had somehow gotten past his mother and went to his car without anyone noticing. They searched the building, but finally found him at the car, so all ended well.

The free lunches that were instituted during COVID are ending, so people are needing to buy their lunches again. Eating together in the cafeteria (gym) is returning, and the school is matching up older kids with littler kids at each table, with each kid having their own duty to do at the table. It should run smoothly in a couple of weeks after the kids all get used to the new routine.

Math – Upper Elementary – “Envision Math” is a new program the whole district is picking up. In consultation with Jenny, we thought it would be good to integrate into our math teaching as well. In the district, it runs from K- on up. LMCS will integrate it into Upper Elementary (a second staff training next month, LMCS sending Special Ed and Title teachers too) to help students transition and be ready when they move on to the Middle School or Lab School and then High School.

Strategic Plan – didn’t get to do as much as Jeff had wanted, but will be doing some more team building in the near future – an upcoming PD day.

PTO – a new volunteer emailed out today her ideas for getting the PTO started again.

Emily recapped a few of the goals the Board had come up with last year for the Director:

- Develop regular communication
- Plan and execute ongoing observation
- Integrate Wyoming State Standards into curriculum
- Emily added one more - Celebrate

Jeff was in each of the classrooms today and let the kids know that they will see him a lot more in their classrooms this year.

Amy noted that last year the Board talked a lot about school safety, and asked if there has been more on that topic since then. Jeff noted that there have been conversations with the Church on that – doors will be locked at all times, even when the kids are outside at recess (someone could jump the fence and come in an unlocked door while the kids are out there). Staff has a protocol for how they answer the door at this time. Talked with teachers too about how they can answer the door if Jeff, Norman, and Bronwyn are all out at the same time. Jeff conveyed what the process is to the parents as well, saying the staff doesn’t yet know all the parents. Jeff talked with the Church about plan to put in cameras inside and outside (toward the busses, the garden area, the entrances, etc.). Will be recorded in case we need to go back later and review something that may have happened. Working on getting a new intercom system, maybe a buzzer system as well, for the front door. Jeff noted that he is working on how to train students how to respond to a situation of someone in the building, but don’t want to scare the kids either. Still working on the plan. How much do you tell the kids and let them know what the threats might be without scaring them? Will be checking in with other schools (and other Montessori schools) about how they approach this.

Megan asked if there are fire alarms in the building and Norman replied that there are, but that these might need to be updated.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Norman – **Finance committee** – has been working fast and furiously and will have a report for the next go-around.

Emily – **Resource Development** – attempting to recruit Micah Richardson when she has less on her plate and is available, she has good connections around the state important for resources.

V. Old Business

Jeff requested the Board keep Major Maintenance on the agenda. Working with the Church on this and will soon have a list of the needed major maintenance projects for the next year. The gym floor is done and looks great! Everything from the art room, kitchen, and office areas is new. Instructional areas have blinds now. The huge flooding rainstorm from a couple of weeks ago – we did get some leaks in the roof here. Jeff's recommendation had been a full roof replacement, but the Church chose to only patch it here and there as needed, so there were some leaks.

Emily – we will continue to keep it on the agenda until you agree with the Church on the list.

BOARD GOALS:

Board looking to enhance the goals of the strategic plan. Looking to enhance building community relations and parent involvement. Ideas of having the speaker lead a session for parents or families interested in Montessori. Community engagement is also an area the Board would like to work on.

Amy noted that she has a group of social studies student teachers this year and could have them interact with the school in some way. Also a principal from Taiwan planning to come on a Fulbright.

LEASE UPDATES:

Jeff – on the precipice of getting a signed lease and we pretty much got everything we wanted. Has been very positive this past week hearing back from their attorney. Some of the problems we have had with custodial service, yard work, snow removal, etc. can be ameliorated if we can take this on ourselves. Jeff has been working with a new person to handle maintenance and custodial service. He has already started working on these little issues and it has been making a positive change. Norman has been working on outside yard maintenance. We have a lead on someone we're talking with about taking this on now.

The new lease takes effect September 1st, so the old lease only in effect another week.

The biggest change is that now LMCS will be responsible for regular maintenance, but the Church still responsible for major maintenance. They will keep the money that comes for rent and major maintenance (construction), but LMCS will keep the part for regular maintenance and upkeep.

Space: We will be in a tight bind space-wise if we need to expand, but a positive is that Senator Rothfus is helping to identify other possible options for buildings if needed – including the old Armory on the east side of campus.

Megan (lawyer) did put in a provision that we can break the lease if the State tells us we need to move because it is their money being used to cover the lease rent. Our hands are tied if the State requires us to move.

Slade School – Considering old building as a possible location for a future LMCS, but a conversation for the facilities committee is needed.

Emily met with the Church to introduce herself to Father Dominic as the new incoming Board Chair. With a new lease agreement signed (by the end of next month), set to have a better working relationship.

VI. New Business

DATE CONFLICT:

October Thursday meeting (Oct. 27th) is a day off of school and Jeff not sure if anyone might want to change the date. Emily checked with everyone – consensus decision to keep the Board meeting on that date.

Afterschool Program:

CCLC (21st Century Community Learning Centers) grant is a 5-year grant from the Federal government to build afterschool programs at schools serving low income or other high need populations. LMCS serves 40% free or reduced lunch population, so should qualify. WDE friend (Karen) said we can use ESSER funds (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) for helping kids catch up from COVID for an afterschool programs. Will plan to start with these funds, then assess how it works and go for CCLC grant funds to continue it for the next 5 years.

Some of the things required: community engagement and a lot of people being brought in while it is being built. Build the program around a community-agreed goal.

Discussion:

Megan – Once we get the grant for five years, if our population changes and we're no longer serving as high a percentage of free and reduced lunch families, would we lose our grant?

Norm – I don't believe so. Once we become a full Title school, would we lose our Full Title status and funds? Jeff – No, once you are Full Title, you remain so.

Norman – Suggests making an ad hoc committee with a Board member, Jeff, and Norman to begin proposing a plan.

Emily – question about capacity. Do we have the capacity to both a Full Title push and an After School program development at the same time? In terms of staff time and effort?

Jeff – I would be working with Heidi on the Title process and I would be working with Norman on the afterschool program process, so I feel confident that we would not be spreading ourselves too thin.

Megan – I like the idea of other people coming in to do an afterschool program so the teachers don't have to. [Big Brothers Big Sisters would be consulting and building].

Jeff – We would let teachers that want to do so to become involved since some are interested in doing things as a way of bringing in some extra money. But they wouldn't need to unless they want to.

Emily – what do you need from the Board?

Norm – an ad hoc committee to help organize and move this forward.

Emily – do you need anything before the next Board meeting?

Norm – Depends on what Jeff thinks and how he wants it to move forward.

Jeff – does any of this already fit within any of our existing committees? Do we really need an ad hoc committee?

Emily – I could see how it could overlap with resources, or accountability, but not sure. We will put an ad hoc committee proposal on next month's agenda and discuss.

Megan – Is this for K and up, or preschool too?

Norm – That's a question we need to discuss and come to consensus about. ESSER funds can only be used for 4-year-olds and up but not our 3-year-olds.

PTO TOPIC:

Volunteer PTO organizer, contacted parents by email, 4 or 5 other parents interested too, PTO could perhaps take over some of the community engagement work the Board is interested in pursuing.

Shawn will meet with the parent PTO volunteer and provide guidance on past PTO structure, by-laws, docs, etc.

Amy suggested the PTO might like to help with the afterschool program too.

VII. Audience Communication II

Emily invited additional audience communication. Janelle Still – only Zoom audience member – thanked the Board for the meeting, no other comments.

VIII. Adjourn

Megan moved and Rich seconded that the meeting be adjourned. (8:06 pm) Unanimous approval.