



Board of Directors
Board Meeting Minutes
September 9, 2021

Free Horizon Montessori PK – 8

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

1. Meeting called to order at: 6:04pm
 - a. Board Members Present: John Frost , Doug Klof, Bekky Robbins, Dan Hofmann, Ben Dodson
 - b. Board Members Absent (excused): Alison Fuhr
 - c. Staff Members Present: Kresta Vuolo, Cyndi Vosburgh, Megan Wells
 - d. Guests: Meggin Rutherford (CSN President)

2. Approval of Agenda for current meeting (including consent agenda)
 - a. Amendments
 - i. Remove CSN update
 - b. Motion to approve as amended: Doug, Dan second, unanimous approval of agenda as amended.

3. Public Comment and Celebrations
 - a. John – thanks to Megan, has been wrangling bus situation, district has made missteps, real mess. Carnival – so nice to see so many staff members and families.
 - b. Cyndi – thank you to Jen, Jen and Lisa, making sure coverage at each class, all before and after care, with grace and a smile. So much work. Thanks to the BOD for hot dog Friday, heard that staff was very appreciative. Thanks to Meggin and Megan for the Carnival!
 - c. Megan – Carnival was amazing (CSN); with all of the things going on, appreciative of grace and courtesy families and community are giving us.
 - d. Doug – first couple days of school, trickiness in process, someone was very vocal and angry about kids coming out the door, overnight it changed, fixed so fast.
 - e. Kresta
 - i. Start of the year, welcoming new and returning colleagues, staff, families. Great to have people in the building, still getting used to how many there are! Having all students be here is amazing.
 - ii. Have more than 50 bus riders (last year ~10), huge celebration in terms of ecological impact. Transportation struggling to get enough drivers. Car line and walk-up going more smoothly.
 1. Pretty amazing watching the car line. Most days done by 3:30. CSN Carnival – huge success!
 2. ILT hit the ground running
 3. New staff starting soon SPL assistant and marketing coordinator
 4. Hot Dog Friday (yay)
 5. Flexibility of entire staff, not fully staffed yet – pulling a lot of assistants from a lot of places. Everyone pitching in where needed.

6. Staff liaisons – Adam Garbus, Kim Erickson; both teachers

4. Principal Update

a. Challenges

- i. Fewer prep days for school and really feeling that
- ii. First week pipe burst, and tornado warning in middle
- iii. Staff vacancies
 1. 4 Primary Assistants (2 will start in October), 1 LE, 1 MS, 1 SPED Asst positions open – coverage needs for playgrounds, classrooms, lunch, recess, entire staff is impacted
 2. Jeffco has 285 jobs posted (131 paraprofessional positions)
- iv. COVID protocols
 1. Not “back to normal”
 2. Balance with screening and keeping children home understanding that not every cough is COVID
 3. Grace and confidentiality, hard to manage
 4. If kids have to stay home for quarantine, Kinder up, provide work via google classroom
 5. Some confusion surrounding COVID protocols
- v. Collective impacts of trauma for students, families, and staff
 1. Hard when everyone is experiencing compassion fatigue. Harder than anyone expected, need to focus on essentials, basic needs, including education.

b. Jeffco Leadership training- be in the moment with the children in front of us

c. COVID-19

- i. 95% staff vaccinated, encouraging all eligible to get vaccinated
- ii. Weekly testing for non-vaccinated staff begins; many positive guardians since start of school one pos student with no close contacts identified; remember all household members should stay home if anyone is awaiting test results with symptoms

d. Enrollment – 358.4/449 Total, budgeted 365.48; 15 Preschool Openings

e. JPS

- i. Superintendent released initiatives

f. Board Visioning Work

- i. How will BOD leverage and include Montessori expertise and input from the faculty?
- ii. When will Montessori faculty be included?
- iii. Who will engage the Montessori faculty?
- iv. What will Montessori faculty conversation look like?

5. Staff Liaison Update – being processed

6. CSN Update (Meggin)

- a. Carnival was a big hit, unanimous vote to do it again next year, come up with tweaks, ways to make it better, not drastically different. Try to get middle schoolers involved, have some ownership of some things (ex fun games, three-legged races, etc). Overall everyone was thrilled
 - b. Megan Wells and Meggin and Heidi, stayed until 9:30 when they finished getting the bounce houses loaded
 - c. 2 new board members, up to 12
 - d. Next two big things:
 - i. Getting together class parents 2.0, trying to give them direction, monthly ideas to build community among the families, support the teacher, if needed, class parent will be the volunteer coordinator for teacher needs. Handout sent every month, really good coordination on expectations.
 - ii. Volunteer forms/directory – if you haven't filled it out, pretty good responses, people who are directly interested in joining the BOD (Sent list to Alison), speakers bureau, can come speak about x topic for middle schoolers. Can sign up for career fair, science fair, fox trot, book fair.
 - iii. Fox Trot – October 6, day before fall break – already have a volunteer who will help run it
 - iv. Book Fair – every kid gets a book, \$10-15 for each child, every kid gets a voucher, only for books, send to parents, if you can cover your child's voucher, please help us, great, if you can't ok. If too much, will use as a fund to buy books for classrooms.
7. Assignments from last meeting (August)
- a. Hot Dog Friday - Alison will email BOD about it, some kind of sign up – all done
 - b. Kresta will update the school calendar to reflect the adjusted meeting time on October 14 – done
 - c. Ben, Cyndi, Doug will connect for a school finances training – on the calendar
 - d. Bekky will send approved minutes to Lisa tomorrow morning - done
 - e. Everyone think about goals – done
8. Annual COI and Confidentiality Agreement – Bekky will send around for everyone to fill out
9. Principal Evaluation Process
- a. Hiring of 3rd Party Vendor for the evaluation – did this two years ago, hire an outside evaluator, come in and then present to the principal evaluation committee
 - i. Discussion
 - 1. Doug – two experienced BOD members on the committee, don't know that every other year is a thing we need to do
 - 2. Ben - what was the outcome of the last evaluator? Was it useful? John – very helpful to Kresta, don't think it was particularly helpful to the BOD, evaluation is done before we meet as a BOD, just seemed like unnecessary outside information.

- a. Kresta – valuable about outside evaluator is a Montessori director, so knows the job, but BOD updated policy manual to involve Community Super who also knows the job, BOD did work last year to ID processes that would assist with having an accurate list of what will be measured against.
- 3. Bekky – would like to see how our altered process works, did a lot of work to update the process last year.
- 4. Dan – ok to pass
- 5. Motion to NOT hire evaluator – Doug, Ben second unanimous approval

10. 2021-2022 Classroom Visits

- a. Feel like it didn't happen until last minute, BOD should make this a priority, respectful to the staff and make it as low impact as we can. Higher priority to get into the classroom to understand what's going on first-hand.
- b. Doug – seeing classrooms in-person been most helpful tool as a BOD member
- c. Kresta – from staff perspective, really appreciate the BOD taking a time to visit

11. Finance Committee Update (Cyndi)

- a. Start of School Year
 - i. Strong Start
 - 1. FTE/PPR – predicted to be higher/BAC – strong BAC enrollment
 - 2. COVID
 - ii. Job Market Challenges
 - 1. New Positions
 - 2. Hiring environment is challenging
 - a. HS diploma, pass a background check (for assistant position)
 - iii. Jeffco Union Contract Negotiations (most of Jeffco staff getting pretty significant raises). May be an ask for stipend or something to incentivize staff to be a little more comparable to JPS.
 - 1. Doug - Is there something we could do now or soon versus waiting until October? Completion stipends?
 - 2. John – one time stipend/bonus? Instead of repeated raise?
 - 3. Cyndi – we have done step increases, this is the year to evaluate salaries. Have lots of funds. Consider what we could afford down the line.
 - 4. Kresta – want to really recognize staff that have stuck with us through the crazy times.
 - 5. Cyndi – Assistants appreciation day, etc.
 - iv. Response to drop in enrollment
 - 1. Recommend stay the course, keep consistent
 - 2. Continue to monitor (Budget revision October 2021)
 - v. Staff Morale and Hiring
 - 1. Possible stipend to keep pace with district
 - 2. Recognize dedication during COVID

3. Salary schedule reviews

12. Facilities Committee Update (Bekky)

- a. Cyndi – did not engage HCM for cost analysis, do cost analysis later, Jeffco may do it for us.
- b. Bekky gave overview of HCM recommendations including
 - i. Proposal of additional program spaces for MS, new practical life room with kitchenette
 - ii. New Community Resource Space + New Offices
 - iii. Add a corridor for better MS classroom access
 - iv. Updates to heating/cooling, plumbing fixtures and piping
 1. Reconfiguration and addition of toilet space for the primary classroom, so that each classroom has shared access to 3 toilets/sinks
 2. Reconfiguring toilets on 2nd level
 - v. Outdoor classroom and garden spaces
 - vi. Other items: security cameras, heating/cooling preventive maintenance, electrical upgrades, upgrade fire alarm system (Jeffco may do this), replace lighting with LED + add control switches, replace old ceilings, replace elementary playground equipment + add shade structures
- c. Doug – we need MS soon; Cyndi and Kresta have a plan for next year, will be workable until we get this done. Kresta – benefit of waiting for Jeffco, will manage everything for us, just give them the money for parts they are not covering.
- d. John – suggestion – that other Montessori school has two different campuses, potentially open a new space at a closed school?

13. 2021-2022 FHM BOD Strategy Discussion (Doug)

- a. Where we left off...
 - i. General Themes
 1. Board goals should be driven by the Boards long-term focus areas
 2. Identified Family Engagement & Core Values of Montessori as two areas for Board focus
- b. Where we're headed
 - i. Clarity of vision and expectation from the Board around Family Engagement & Core Values of Montessori
- c. Important excerpts from the Bylaws and Board Policy Manual
 - i. Create and periodically review the mission statement
 - ii. Primary obligation of the BOD is to advance the mission and vision of FHM and support the long-term success of its students and the school through strategic planning and governance
 - iii. The Board shall set and enforce policy and assure that FHM is run in a manner consistent with the Mission Statement
- d. Today's Work: Get the ideas out, paint the picture – dream big
 - i. Long process, important work
 - ii. Share and listen

- iii. In a future meeting, we'll ensure there is plenty of time to discuss and debate specific long-term goals and monitoring strategies
 - 1. Family engagement: What does engaging every family at FHM mean to you? What are elements of a culture that engages families well? What does a successfully engaged family look like to you?
 - 2. Montessori Education: What should the "Montessori" education look like at FHM

e. Discussion

- i. John – are we setting goals for the BOD or FHM. Doug – what is the goal, setting goals for the school, should have internal goals, but this is goals for the school, have wonderful staff and admi to drive this, make it operational, add on all of the things we don't know about at a high level.
- ii. John – can't start to think about family engagement until we have data, otherwise don't know if anything is working. We need to decide what we want to move towards, but then we need to have a plan to objectively measure that. Have to be able to measure this objectively, so that we know if we're doing well, so Kresta can look at the data or I need to pivot so I can meet these goals. Objective measures as we move forward.
 - 1. Ben – what we have is the Family Partnership Survey
 - 2. Doug – step back further – what are we measuring, what do we even need?
 - 3. Ben – what's going well, what's not going well
- iii. Doug – three things
 - 1. We are a place that families choose to re-enroll their children, tells me that people are happy, probably feeling like a part of the school (also measurable)
 - 2. People feel that the school is welcoming
 - 3. People heavily participate in events, surveys, CSN events, all the "stuff" – have high participation rate
- iv. Cyndi – Family engagement piece really is about students learning and education and how we get families to engage in their students learning. At a more basic level of supporting their students at home and in the community. We are a school, it's about education. BOD is very involved in school, know that kids are getting support at home and support from you. We have families who are struggling to just stay above water. Those kids don't have that support at home – those are the families that we really need to somehow wrap our arms around and help support them. How do we get families engaged in their student's learning at the school?
 - 1. John – how would that look practically? How can the school effect that kind of engagement at home, without shifting focus out of the classroom and into the home?
 - 2. Kresta – example - loved the Carnival, but some families can't afford the extra gas/time to get to the school. If someone feels like they belong somewhere, more likely to come back, more likely to ask questions,

finding points of entry, not being room parent, not buying at auction, points of entry for all.

3. Ben – mindset at looking at it through most disengaged lens will be beneficial, will raise the whole boat
 4. John – make sure we're not forgetting 85%-90% of students who are doing alright
 5. Bed – identification of what those needs are is crucial
- v. Doug – Communication challenges, how can we better communicate with the school?
 - vi. Kresta - back to core mission of the school is education, need that connection to learning, to academic mission of the school.
 - vii. Cyndi – lots of discussion among the staff, where is the educational piece? How is this related to education? How is this supporting education?
 - viii. Dan – going through the book, viewed the increase in student outcomes as a by-product, philanthropy will as well, do we want to be more of a family engagement school or family friendly school where we can engage when we wanted to. Are we looking to have everyone going out and trying to engage the families? Are we family friendly, make it easy for engagement when families want to.
 1. Kresta - mismatch in those expectations, volunteering and showing up is not the only way we measure engagement, lots of different ways of engagement, nothing to do with showing up, benefit shows up in their child.
 2. Bekky – I think this mismatch caused a lot of discord, lots of disappointment among community and then COVID made everything worse.
 3. John – how do we make it easy?
 4. Ben – to be successful, not sure if it's and or or. Have an open door, have to go out there and try to engage in some situations. Critical that we communicate what we're after – if it's a particular topic, we're going to try and engage you on this topic, or have an open door on this other topic
 5. John – at CCD, everybody, from president, down to adjunct faculty, aware of realities of student body, hyper-focused. Every decision made with – how does this affect students, does this provide value for our students, very clearly identified their students, their target-market/demographic. Who are the families at FHM? Do we have a picture of who we're serving?
 - a. Kresta – what do we want our 8th grade graduates look like? What do we want them to leave with? That's the part that we have control over, no control over how they come to us, but once they're here, control over how we spend time with them, curriculum, engage beyond the school with the community.

- b. Cyndi – how do we get who someone isn't our typical family engaged. This should be about student's education, think we keep veering off into social stuff. How do we support families support their children in learning? Example – how do we get parents to be at home saying hey, can you show me how to spell that word because your teacher said you're learning that – student knows that the parent values the education and supporting learning in the school.
- c. Kresta – for parent/teacher conferences, that kind of thing, absolutely striving for 100%, do what it takes to get parents to conferences. Other times, curriculum night, noticed you didn't come, here's how to contact me. When we're asking staff to do breakfasts, carnivals, eats into time that they could spend reaching out to families. Use home visits as intervention when kids aren't coming to school – coming from supportive space. Lots of tools that we use in the times that they are necessary.
- d. Dan – every family feels informed, empowered, and included – whether they want to jump in and participate is up to them, at least they are informed of what the opportunities are, empowered to get involved, and included.
- e. Ben – open door approach, trying to pull you in, not shoving it on you, but come with us
- f. Cyndi – empowering families to help their kids learn and grow – this school is not with them, parents are.
- g. Doug – what do we want to reach out about? P/T conferences, want a kind of school where everyone shows up for plays, carnivals,
- h. Kresta – if we take away a requirement, sometimes it works better
- i. Dan – what would be the goals or action items for everyone to show up? It's probably in that feels included category, don't know about, should have some of these things, don't push it, will happen naturally.
- j. Kresta – a few, well-organized things is better than a lot of ok things.
- k. John if we achieve those three things, will have people at the play, carnival, at P/T conferences, communicating 1:1 with teachers.
- l. Bekky – if families feel all of those things, they will feel like they belong.
- m. Ben – in a fox flash, different ways of asking about your day at school – opportunities to teach our parents about how to be engaged with kids

- f. Doug – got to a good spot, quick decision point here, what should we think about for next meeting? Spend some time getting into the weeds a bit more in measurement of this one, can't do both – what's a good next step?
 - i. John – take a step forward on this one
 - ii. Kresta – CSN also working on re-engaging families, superintendent also ID'd as a district initiative
 - iii. Dan – can any of it be moved to conversation at a committee like SAC?
 - 1. John – still at a high enough level, maybe writing of questions (or something like that) would be good to send to SAC, still a discussion for the board.
 - iv. Kresta – when Montessori discussion happens, the staff wants to be involved from the beginning.
 - v. Cyndi – staff, right now, is really overwhelmed.
 - vi. Doug – do the same thing with the Montessori thing, long ways to go before we're ready to get the staff involved, also come up with ideas on how to measure these.
 - vii. John – get some time at October 7th BOD meeting? Ask about Montessori piece, listen to them discuss their ideas
 - 1. Doug – want to talk internally, come up with questions to ask the staff
 - 2. Kresta – staff involved early, because they are the experts, but will get many opinions about what Montessori is.
 - viii. Doug – think about measurements for what we discussed, think about same types of things

14. Assignments

- a. Bekky - Will send approved minutes to Lisa for Posting
- b. Bekky – Will send out annual COI and Confidentiality Agreements for Directors to sign

15. Adjournment– Doug moves, Ben seconds, unanimous approval, adjourned at 9:13PM.

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