

**ISLAND MONTESSORI CHARTER SCHOOL
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES**

02.17.21

FINAL

Meeting Location: 6339 Carolina Beach Rd., Wilmington, NC 28412 and virtually, via Zoom
Time: 7:00PM

In attendance, onsite: Eric, Melinda, Kari, and Renae
In attendance, via Zoom: Melissa, Molly, Jill, and Michael
Staff in attendance, onsite: Alicia
Staff in attendance, via Zoom: Brian, Carrie, Blair, Susan, and Yvonne
Absent: None

Guests: Jessica Anderson, Dana Eder, Emelie Meyers, Jeremy Linquist, Mattie McMurray, Jennifer Garrabrant, Michele Denison, Anna Lee, Crimson Walton, and Sarah Richmond

Alicia announced that this meeting would be recorded and archived. She emphasized that it is a public meeting and stated that if anyone would like to view the video archive, they may request it from the front office. Eric motioned to open the meeting, seconded by Melinda. The motion to open the meeting was unanimously approved by the board. The Island Montessori Charter School board meeting was called to order at 7:06PM, by Eric.

2 Minute Visitor Comments:

Jessica Anderson: No comment. Ms. Anderson is just waiting to hear what decision will be made regarding reopening. She wants her students back full time.

Dana Eder: Ms. Eder identified herself as a middle school parent. She very much wants her child back. Ms. Eder cited our small school size as beneficial for reopening. She shared that she works in healthcare and does not feel that teachers will be vaccinated quickly.

Emelie Meyers: Ms. Meyers stated that she has three students at IMS and is normally very involved in their classrooms. She is in attendance tonight in an attempt to understand the process behind the decision regarding reopening. She is interested in knowing if the board has considered different options for returning, including different groupings of students and teachers. Ms. Meyers expressed appreciation for the teachers.

Jeremy Linquist: Mr. Linquist shared that he is a founding board member. He would like to see the children back in the school at least four days a week. He shared that he had undertaken extensive research on the subject. He does not feel that we have had many cases or outbreaks of COVID-19 at the school. Mr. Linquist would have preferred if survey questions could be reconsidered, moving forward. He would like to see more space on surveys for personalized feedback. He commended the school for the amazing job they are doing. Mr. Linquist wants his children back in school face to face, as he feels they are suffering in the current model.

Yvonne Sacewicz: Ms. Sacewicz shared that she is not comfortable returning in Plan A. She shared the following statement: "We have well over 100 families (including staff) in our school community and there is a wide array of comfort levels among everyone when considering appropriate levels of safety. My family chooses to keep our exposure limited. Other families consider the risk factors low and make decisions based on their personal comfort level. These families are attending large events, such as soccer tournaments. They are also regularly traveling, hosting sleepovers, and gathering with those outside of their household; even though these actions are considered not safe according to current NC Department of Health and Human Services Secretarial Directives. Unfortunately, the personal choices made by those who consider the risk factors low put others at risk. With a class of more than 10 children, it is not possible to create an environment that respects families (including my own) whose comfort level is to continue to follow NC DHHS guidelines to stay home unless attending work or school and maintain 6ft of social distancing (even outdoors) when around those outside of your immediate household. In consideration of all staff and families (not just the majority), we must remain in Plan B or, if needed, Plan C. We must consider the option that allows every child an opportunity for face to face instruction and social interaction, while continuing to provide an abundance of caution (limited exposure and 6 feet of social distance). When boundaries and concerns of others in our community are no longer respected by those who disregard safety guidelines, we've compromised our vision and commitment to grace and courtesy. We can only respect the entire community by remaining in Plan B."

Mattie McMurray: Ms. McMurray agrees with Ms. Sacewicz. She wants to stay in Plan B. She noted that the county still remains in the orange, per the county's color coded risk assessment. Ms. McMurray feels that spread can potentially occur within the school classroom. She cited several area outbreaks at local schools and highlighted teacher deaths in NC. She remains doubtful of the rigor of contact tracing. Ms. McMurray feels strongly about the necessity of recommended physical distancing as a mitigating factor.

Jennifer Garrabrant: Ms. Garrabrant expressed support of Ms. McMurray's statement. She wants to keep our teachers safe.

Michele Denison: Ms. Denison respects the concerns our teachers have but cited that many teachers are also facing obstacles. She does not feel we reflect more urban school models, and feels the challenges are surmountable. She cited various articles indicating that teacher vaccinations may not be necessary for a safe reopening. Ms. Denison advocated diligent mask wearing. She is concerned about our children falling behind. She feels like we are potentially compromising the future and existence of our school. She would like us to be resourceful. Ms. Denison believes the board is hesitating to move into Plan A based on the fears of a few.

Anna Lee: She appreciates the thoughtfulness so far. She would like to stay in Plan B. Ms. Lee is worried about disruption and inconsistency with full return and potential exposures. She supports Plan B for everyone's safety. Ms. Lee expressed displeasure with Ms. Denison's statement. She felt that it was racist.

Crimson Walton: Ms. Walton expressed appreciation for the varying viewpoints. She wants teachers to feel supported. Her first grader is struggling. Miss Walton feels that he was further ahead as a kindergartner. He does not do well in distance learning. She is considering pulling him for IMS if we do not reopen to Plan A. Vaccines are a toss up for her, but not necessarily mandatory.

Sarah Richmond: Ms. Richmond experienced technical difficulties and was unable to share.

FSA Liaison (Melissa):

Melissa reported that Take Out Tuesday will be coming up next week. T3 registration is underway for both virtual and in-person participation. Sponsors for the T3 are still needed. Interested parties should contact Ms. AmberLynn Pappas. The FSA is still seeking volunteers to serve in board positions for next school year. Again, interested parties should contact Ms. AmberLynn Pappas. Melissa commended the FSA for their contributions to our community.

Rena read the mission statement.

IMS MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Island Montessori Charter School is to enable children of diverse backgrounds to learn and grow at their own pace by offering a developmentally appropriate and challenging academic Montessori environment that models grace and courtesy and fosters a peaceful community of lifelong learners.

Meeting Agenda:

Jill motioned to approve the meeting agenda, seconded by Melinda. The motion to approve the meeting agenda was unanimously approved by the board.

Previous Minutes:

Jill made a motion to accept the February 17th meeting minutes, with amendments as noted by Melinda. It was seconded by Melinda. The motion to accept the February 17th meeting minutes, with amendments as noted by Melinda, was unanimously approved by the board.

Board Recognition:

None.

Communications Director Update (Blair):

Blair reported that she tried to be encouraging and intentional with her social media posts this week. She is starting a new student led staff spotlight feature. Blair has placed items on the events page, updated the board page, and is working on edits about scholarship opportunities for the Children's School. Alicia and several board members commended Blair for her great work.

Covid Update/Reopening:

Eric commended the board for the dedication and perseverance through this past school year. He shared that this topic has weighed heavily on all board members.

Alicia shared a reopening option presentation, which was previously shared with the board for review. The presentation included several graphs, survey results from both families and teachers, and MAP test results.

OPTIONS FOR RETURNING:

1. Remain in Plan B.
2. Return in Plan A, beginning Monday, March 8th, for grades first through sixth. Middle School to remain in Plan B.
3. Stay in Plan B until the March board meeting. This would allow teachers time to begin the vaccination process, prior to the students returning full time, hopefully. Potentially move to Plan A on March 22nd for grades first through sixth and potentially seventh and eighth grades, too, pending state clarity.

To consider:

Under Plan A, social distancing of 6 ft is still recommended but not required in every scenario. It is required in areas when children are in line or congregating in an area. Face masks continue to be required, especially if children are not 6ft apart - this includes PE and recess. Vaccine roll-out will begin allowing school staff to sign up for appointments as of February 24th. However, the state shared that the number of available vaccines is very low so the roll-out will take time.

Alicia shared all pie graphs and various teacher survey results. She also shared all pie graphs and displayed parent survey results. Alicia shared MAP data. She noted that most of our students, at every grade level, have shown 50% growth.

Eric: would like to see a decision made tonight. He does not want it pushed to March. He thinks everyone needs time to plan. Melinda, while respecting the teachers, and the desire for vaccination, made a motion to return in Plan A, on March 22nd, for first through sixth grades. Renae does not want that to be a moving target. Molly does not feel that this motion speaks to the teachers safety. She feels that we will have more information in March. Jill appreciates what everyone has brought to the table. She noted that a third of teachers are undecided about vaccination, and some who will choose not to vaccinate at all. Molly pointed out that our students are performing well, per the MAP test results provided by Alicia. She does not feel we can accommodate appropriate social distancing in Plan A. Alicia shared that some families indicated they may choose to move to Plan C if we return to Plan A, or leave the school if we don't. Eric mentioned low participation in Zoom meetings. Jill cited the mission statement. Molly does not feel we are failing the mission statement academically. Eric appreciates the teachers' perspective and concerns but feels we have two other groups to consider: students and families. Alicia clarified about Zoom participation and attendance. She feels that lack of participation is slightly higher than usual. Jill asked about social distancing. Alicia stated that we can fit 15 students into a classroom at 6 feet. She tried it recently in Eleanor's classroom. Eric feels that we should think outside the four walls of the classroom and expand the boundaries of the classroom. Alicia stated that we ordered several tents that were poor quality and had to be returned. A new, commercial grade tent was ordered and delivered today. She stated that the rain was an issue. She needs options that allow for outdoor covered space, even in the rain. Melissa does not support moving into Plan A either on March 8th or March 22nd. She thanked Alicia for the surveys. She feels that there is enough concern among the teachers about their safety for us to not consider moving to Plan A. She would like to allow our teachers the option of vaccination, as an added layer of protection. Jill feels that we have a lot of flexibility in switching plans. Eric discussed the decision process about our recent abrupt transition to Plan C (UE). Michael asked for clarification about the various plans. He feels we all need to be mindful about our activities outside the classroom. He doesn't understand why we can't wait until March to decide, when we will have a better understanding of case numbers. Eric stated he does not want to be the only school not reopened. He wants to allow planning for teachers. He thinks we are kicking the bucket down the road if we just keep putting off a date to decide. Molly asked for clarity about what planning was specifically needed. Michael respectfully disagrees with Eric about the need to decide right away. Michael questions why we consider ourselves more qualified than the county to decide on the safety of reopening. Molly feels that our charter allows us to make independent decisions. Alicia reminded Michael that we followed the NHCS decision in the fall, which may not have been wise. Kari feels that we are ignoring the needs of the students. Molly feels that the test results support that the students are growing. Melinda feels we have been very cautious and that we are at a point where we need to make a decision. Brian does not think we will be able to easily move back to Plan B, if we move to Plan A. Eric and Melinda feel like our parents are frustrated. Jill wants to adhere to the mission

for our children. She cited that the CDC stated that teachers do not even need vaccinations. She feels like we have fluidity to return to Plan B. Renee feels that masks work and we need to stop obsessing about physical distancing. Molly feels that perspective disregards the well being of our teachers. Eric thinks that now is the time to move forward with Plan A. Molly feels that waiting until next month is wise and feels like we are rushing the decision. Melissa expressed that we have proceeded with caution so far, that hope is on the horizon, and that we should not move into Plan A in March. The motion to return in Plan A, on March 22nd, for first through sixth grades passed 6-2, with Molly and Melissa dissenting.

Academic Update (Susan):

Susan shared that consistency in professional development is important. She is continuing her coaching on observation. She shared that the teachers are feeling overwhelmed. Susan reports that teachers' perspectives are being heard in surveys and meetings. She emphasized wellness and self-care as a priority. She feels that teachers must invest in their own flourishing if the student is to flourish. Susan is utilizing the Johari Window Model for greater self awareness, to aid in expanding one's self knowledge, empowerment, and create a celebratory shared discovery. She compared it to the binomial cube and cited cosmic interdependence, as advocated by Maria Montessori. Susan reports that nine UNCW field students have been placed in UE/LE. She feels that our admin team is supporting our teachers, who are doing so much, so well.

HOS Report (Alicia)

Grade Level Active Enrollment:

Kindergarten: 25, 1st Grade: 24, 2nd Grade: 23, 3rd Grade: 23, 4th Grade: 23, 5th Grade: 24, 6th Grade: 20, 7th Grade: 22, 8th Grade: 20, Total: 204

Student Discipline Report:

No incidents to report.

Updates on Goals/Issues for Discussion

1. Academic Achievement

Goals for 2020/2021

1. *Increase growth for all students with differentiated instruction in Montessori Lessons driven by data/observations*
2. *Provide meaningful learning opportunities for all students during remote learning times*
3. *Strengthen all aspects of math especially at the Upper Elementary*
4. *Strengthen all aspects of reading at K-3 level.*
5. *Improve MTSS*
6. *Teach **perspective** in all learning opportunities as part of mindfulness*

Data for Reporting/Discussion

2. Mission Based Program and School Improvement Initiatives Updates

- Staff are working with EC Coordinator to review data points and begin tier support and documentation
- The Academic Committee met to review progress reports, goals for the committee, year of ideas, bridging ceremony.
- Prospective Parent meetings are complete. The lottery application deadline has passed. We received 19 sibling applications and 166 applications for grades K-8 (many were from the same families).

3. Facility Update

- Shades! A process within a process! A new tent for UE has been ordered to provide a covered outdoor space - it is here - just needs to be put up. We rented a tent for the next two months to provide an outdoor covered area for LE.
- Grass areas are being maintained on an as needed basis for the winter.
- Hallway units in LE hallway are back in functional condition.

4. Compliance Reporting

- Grant follow-up and documentation is being completed as needed
- Title IX policy, first read ready for the Board to review.

5. Professional Development

- Staff reviewed the MTSS process and needed items/deadlines moving forward.
- Administration is working to have PD center around self-care and mental health for staff and things they can use in their classrooms/online with their students.

Financial Report (Treasurer's Report – Kari) **Please check, Kari!******

1. Money in United Account: \$481k
2. Money to draw from the state: \$523k
3. Live Oak account: \$251k
4. NBKC account: \$251k
5. CFMV account: \$407k
6. Identified Potential Short/Long Term Issues: none at this time:
 - The state has not asked to revert money back yet.

Strategic Plan update – State Plan:

No update.

Board Strategic Plan:

No update.

Special Board Projects:

No update.

Executive Committee (EX):

No update.

Grant Committee:

No update.

Finance Committee:

No update.

IT:

No update.

EC:

No update.

Nutrition/Lunch Program:

No update.

After School Specials:

No update.

Outdoor Committee:

Jill and Eric met to discuss the outdoor marsh area.

HR/Policies and Procedures:

Board to review Title IX policy.

Marketing:

No update.

Diversity Update:

No update.

Alumni Committee:

No update.

OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS:

Old Business:

- Jill and Eric met to discuss the outdoor marsh area. Jill shared that plans for that area were sidelined due to COVID. They will be assessing the marsh area together soon. Eric hopes to put a plan in place and earmark funds in the budget for this project.
- Molly created a Google Doc for board recommendations. Eric shared that we will be moving forward with that model. Molly will send it to board plus.

New Business:

None.

CLOSED SESSION:

Jill made a motion to move into closed session, Melinda seconded it. The motion to move to closed session was unanimously approved by the board. The board entered entered closed session at 8:52.

OPEN SESSION:

Melinda made a motion to return to open session, seconded by Jill. The motion to return to open session was unanimously approved by the board. The board resumed open session at 8:59. Eric made a motion to accept bid number three for installation of a new roof. Melinda seconded it. The motion to accept bid number three for installation of a new roof was unanimously approved by the board.

Molly motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Michael. The board unanimously approved to adjourn. Meeting was adjourned at 8:25PM.

REMINDERS:

- **Next board meeting is Wednesday, March 17th, 2021, at 7:00PM, via Zoom.**
- **All committee reports are due by Friday, March 12th, 2021 [PDF Format Please!].**
- **Next Executive Committee meeting is Thursday, March 11th, 2021, at 10:00AM, via Zoom.**

Upcoming Events:

- **February 23rd: Lottery Night!**
- **March 5th: end of the 3rd quarter**
- **March 8th: the beginning of the last 9 weeks**

ACTION STEP ITEMS:

- **Molly to share Board Recruitment materials**
- **Board to review Title IX policy**