

**Compass Montessori
Board of Directors**
Meeting Minutes
August 23, 2016, Wheat Ridge Campus



6:03 pm: Call to Order

Board Members in Attendance: ALL

1) Consent Agenda Items (5 mins)

- a) Approve agenda
- b) ED Dashboard
- c) Treasurer's Report/Variance Reports
- d) Approve July, 2016, meeting minutes
- e) Approve Annual Agenda

Rebecca moved and Hanna seconded to remove July meeting minutes from the consent agenda. Unanimously approved.

Rebeca moved and Eileen seconded to pass amended consent agenda. Unanimously approved.

2) Community Sharing (15 mins)

- a) *Celebrate Compass* – a time for our community to identify and share positive feedback on our community
 - i) *Mike complimented the numerous ways Compass celebrates back to school.*
 - ii) *Cameron said that people stayed beyond expectations to help. All had great energy. All Wheat Ridge teachers were present.*
 - iii) *Rebecca said that the energy going back to school was so good. Felt happy to leave her kids in such a great environment.*
 - iv) *Seth celebrated the farm team and efforts to transform that space. Felt like good new energy. They appreciated so many efforts were done in support of the students.*

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- v) *Seth celebrated Scott for all of his hard work. Scott pulled up*
- vi) *Mike celebrated Dan Snare, previous Board member. Dan Snare placed a chair in the middle of the room to help us remember why we are here and Mike brought a chair he brought to continue this proud tradition and to keep the board focused.*
- vii) *Pat Howard celebrated Seth – Tuesday and Wednesday were hard work.*
- viii) *Bill celebrated everyone for their efforts to hold everything up while he spent time with his newborns.*
- ix) *Amy Storey celebrated all the hard work to realign the farm school. Having a son go into his ninth year, it's exciting to see the changes in that area.*

b) *Community Comment – None*

3) Updates and Reports (1hr, 15 mins)

- a) CMEF End of Year Report (10 mins) – Amy Storey
 - i) Handed out two-page report. CMEF has \$137,000.
 - (1) Direct giving is the most steady and successful followed by the Fest, which is largely successful through the raffle. Then the Mesa run is the other large fundraiser.
 - (2) Funds were distributed mostly to classroom materials, followed by teacher training, campus general funds, farm school trips, and a small portion going to Education resources and staff lunches.
 - (3) This year, no big changes are expected. Lost chair for Festa.

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- (4) Amy will distribute summary to parents through communications channels.
 - (5) Board discussed some of the specific areas of support and how it is spent. The specific large benefit from teacher training and taking that training back and sharing it with others was discussed.
 - (6) PTA is operated separately. However, there is a need, like with bingo, to make people aware of how these different items support the school. PTA really wants time and involvement and community, while teachers drive the bingo success.
 - (7) Seth commented on the improvement seen based on CMEF's support of middle schoolers and grants program for farm school field trips. Amy suggested that having a report out from the trips would help people understand how their CMEF gift supports the children of Compass.
 - (8) Teacher requests will continue to be funneled through Bill.
 - (9) Bill recognized Amy for her efforts to develop fun club and just one way to foster community within the school.
- b) Strategic Plan Update – Communications Goal (15 mins) – Tiffany Grunert
- i) Tiffany and Bill talked about communications strategy for the year. Need for a formal communications plan and need for a communications audit. Desire to create a plan to support the strategic objectives of the school and to audit communications channels for effectiveness at the end of the year. Also discussed and desire board feedback regarding communications committee. What parts of the communications plan do we want to drive this year.
 - ii) Rebecca recommended a baseline info from last survey.

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- iii) Bill wanted to have a more strategic group get together to form a committee to keep checking in. Group would include staff and parents. Bill raised the question if the group should be short term or long term.
- iv) Previous adherence to a communications plan.
- v) Compass creates alignment between entities.
- vi) Compass has created brand identity.
- vii) Clear channels, things cleaned up.
- viii) How are we tracking – haven't done that. But made some progress in those areas and the framework for reporting has been accomplished through the dashboard. Strategic plan is helping us accomplish the goals for communicating by reporting out specifics. How do we technically want to report on it. Bill, thinks the priorities should be on the communications plan and audit.
- ix) Seth felt that some of the communications work should be more broad and focus on who the community is, what we are doing and our next steps.
- x) Mike said, this year, we'll hit three years in June in the strategic plan. Mike felt that many of the logistical issues have been resolved, which allows us to turn and have a more formalized communications plan.
- xi) Seth recommended asking parents what they want to know about the school. There was a time when schools were the melting pot of our community.
- xii) Previous Board Member Tiffany Bucknam said that at the time the communications strategic initiative was written, things were falling apart. Many of the problems were resolved and allows us to look forward. It feels like where we are meant to go.
- xiii) Bill recommended creating this document. Go through the process of building it.

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- xiv) Mike recommended that we consider prioritizing items from the strategic plan for communications for the year.
- c) Teacher Updates/Reports (10 mins each)
- d) Guest Teacher (10 mins each)
 - i) Tina Barath, teaches Upper El in the Water Room at Wheat Ridge. She thanked the board. She also stressed the difference between the Fun Club and the Fun Committee. The Fun Committee has booked the Tavern this winter at the golf course to have a staff celebration this winter. Tina and Ann have lead this. Bill also shared that Tina is the leader of the Upper El environment (3 classrooms, 6 teachers) and Tina is the most experienced mentor. Last year she was selected in a mentoring program!
 - ii) Megan Witurki, Lower El teacher at Wheat Ridge was staff board liaison last year and is excited to serve again. It's been a whirlwind, but she's excited by the energy. She was excited about work thus far on Emergenics.
 - iii) Pat Howard echoed the excitement for Emergenics. Upper El writing assessment in Golden was conducted. Of highlight was the fifteen-minute conference with the children. Pat said the energy around the school is much higher than it has been in the past. Families seem eager and excited.
- e) Principal Updates (10 mins each)
 - i) Cameron – work day was incredible. Having training for a full week with Emergenetics was a great way to set the tone for the year. It was really powerful and insightful to learn about the personalities in the group's dynamic.
 - ii) Seth – Showed his profile from Emergenetics, which shows how he behaves and interacts with others. At Golden, there is an equal distribution of types of character.

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Seth is excited and curious of how this will help. Fascinating tool for the leadership team. Seth said that staff is also working on learning about non-violent communication. This coupled with compassionate classroom. Golden will start first but Wheat Ridge will start second. Golden also worked on challenges related to teamwork and problem solving. Light was shed on what is possible moving forward. A few laws of innovation: breathe, create a circle of inclusion and safety. Sound. Provide boundaries and growth. Develop protocol process. Trust the process and see it through seek consensus, clarity, and become self-aware of your triggers and how you share common goals. End and avoid mis-assessments. Move to inquiry. It was a very moving experience and Seth is excited to utilize these new tools moving forward. Text at the farm school was also mentioned: An Ethic of Excellence – a fascinating read about leveraging the power of peer review and critique and how to create an environment of beauty of high expectations by Ron Burger. A good primer to the book is Austin's Butterfly on YouTube. Seth is focused on culture development and is recommending *Conscious Education The Bridge to Freedom* (currently out of print). Three copies are available at the lending library in Golden. Seth is excited to talk about some of these core concepts with parents.

- f) ED Update (20 mins)
 - i) Bill discussed success of REDAC support program. There are some state funds for summer programs for Redac support in the summer. Summertime is a time when they aren't giving gains in their development. If they maintain during the summer, kids do better upon return. Participation was a success and getting the program running was good. Would like to give the program better structure. Success was largely dependent

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upon the tutor as well. It was staff run. Teachers worked directly with students throughout the summer. The other big challenge was that REDAC support helped with the Lexia program for math. In the future the school needs to decide if we continue to support it. It is a good way to pay teachers, but may want to consider charging for the program. It impacted facilities. Offering tutoring at Golden, caused additional fees for facilities that didn't previously exist. Dillon Meyers and Cameron discussed starting an evaluation of student success. Some parents stood up the teachers because it was free. Cameron suggested that having a fee associated would ensure this didn't happen in the future.

- ii) Training this summer. Teachers go to Atlanta, Tacoma and New York. Five graduated and two continue to get their certification work. Six-week intensive was also attended in Ohio. Eight staff are hoping to go next summer to the adolescent orientation. Big pipeline of teachers that want that training. Training was paired back this year, but feels it is a healthy budget for both campuses.
- iii) Set. 14 the first accountability meeting. Ok at survey data to make improvement. Mapp data from spring, and state assessments will be shared.
- iv) CMASS – the state has finalized their CMASS results, but it is embargoed until Sept. 1. Bill can share data then but wants to make sure we are careful not to chase CMAS performance as they are based on subcategories that can't define the standard. So as an expert, it's difficult to create an action plan. Bill is leaning toward using MAP and recordkeeping to measure student progress. Taking another path is breaking from the strategic plan. Numerous critiques of the timing of the release have been made as the timing doesn't allow any direction moving forward. Staff echoed a need to continue to

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- invest the Mapp assessment as an evaluation tool. Bill said that a year and a half ago, the data was too low to calculate a rating. Parent concern for not participating drove up participation. For those who participated last year, there wasn't much concern.
- v) Farm School team is working very hard! Unique challenges with change.
 - vi) Walton Great Work is in a development phase. The Walton Foundation wants to support the school's adolescent programs. There is opportunity to work with new rebranded Great Work. Mike asked that outside entity involvement must be discussed at the board level before moving forward. Grant work does not need board input. Bill is looking at appropriate projects for grant support. Somewhere between \$60,000-\$200,000 depending upon timeframe.
 - vii) Moving to sign up genius for volunteer tracking. Each classroom can have their own account. Kalina just reached out to staff today to let them know. New web updates include staff bios. Could include board bios. Classroom pages will also be developed. Building this up. Board could have its own page.
 - (1) This year the compass points newsletter will be online as a blog, instead of newsletter.
 - (2) Mike mentioned the need to include minutes from February. Rebecca mentioned having an archive folder and just using the notes from the last few months.
 - viii) End of Year Financial Report: End of year numbers are favorable. Wheat Ridge shows a higher amount from summer program, but remember that expenses come in the next fiscal year (could look skewed by \$50,000).
 - ix) Enrollment Update and budget impact: Enrollment won't be known until Oct. 1. However, right now the FTE target was 213.5 and a report has shown it is 210.5. We

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are bringing in 3 kids to Wheat Ridge to adjust. This typically should have happened in June, but it is working out. In Golden, more shifting typically happens. We are off by 2 FTE, but waiting to hear back from some families and feel they will fill.

4) Education Segment – Compass Culture (45-60 mins) Discussion led by Mike.

Context: Compass has had much change in the past few years, both in terms of staff, administration and structure. As Compass strives to improve its practice and meet its challenges, it is possible to inadvertently lose touch with elements of the Compass culture which we wish to preserve.

Key Questions: What is Compass culture and what are those cultural elements we wish to preserve?

Goal: To begin a discussion about the intentional continuation of Compass culture. Ultimately it may result in a tight-loose framework around key cultural elements. For instance, perhaps X number of trips becomes a ‘tight’ expectation but all the details surrounding when, where, how and why are ‘loose’ details. Beyond the above there are no preconceived notions or expectations regarding the discussion other than the need to be grounded in Montessori practice, and a desire to begin the discussion with the Compass educators with the deepest ties to Compass history.

Staff mentioned the importance of trips as a growth opportunity. Tina mentioned Upper El at Wheat Ridge is the decision to eliminate the fall trips and encourage the kids on going

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outs. The result is to inspire them to go out. These small day trips are student lead (but supervised). All 5 classes also go to Winter Park and do Outdoor Education. 5 stay in a room together. They have to take care of themselves, have proper clothing, etc. In spring they plan their spring trip. So now, the structure has a buildup for the kids. These items are very important to building self-reliance, independence. It allows kids to take risks in a safe environment.

Pat mentioned the importance in getting out into the world and experience the world. This is critical to the Montessori way. Golden has seen a few different ways to conduct trips. Some trips can be expensive and hard on families. But all trips were based on Montessori literature.

Staff has not gotten a lot of calls related to the topic. However, there has been a lot of informal conversation about it.

Bill felt that culture is more than just trips – all agree trips are important and there is some discussion on what is the right balance. Bill is interested in the role of the parent in the Compass culture. Bill's perspective on trips is that a lot of the school has shifted. When Bill started it was a rag tag bunch of parents participating. The parent committee the investment from parents has shifted. Previously, parents were ready to financially support trips. However, now parents are coming to Compass for different reasons and the voice of these parents needs to be included in this conversation.

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Do we want to say that this is a defining characteristic of Compass? There has been some struggle helping people be aware that it is an essential Montessori practice.

Pat mentioned that if it is a tradition, or a culture for Compass, it's really easy for the adults to sway it.

Seth: Teachers need to be careful to fight for the child. This notion of us being a piece of the world is critical to the world. Perhaps do an ethnographic study of Compass? Who creates the culture? Aligning the principals and then giving them the tools to succeed.

Choices were made in the development of the strategic plan. The whole community comes together to make that choice. There are some educators that are sad about these changes.

What should we do and how should we protect them?

Small increments of change are better than big sudden ones.

Seth recommended having outside consultant to provide support as we evolve.

Tiffany Bucknam suggested that in reflecting on the evolution of the last several years we are at risk of losing important things. Utilizing a study of Compass's culture at all levels

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could help ensure the school was meeting the goals of the strategic plan and ensuring success.

Cameron mentioned that a wave of teachers attending a training has a wave on the culture. Large groups of folks attending the same training effects the culture.

Tight/Loose in the past has helped us define AMI & AMS. However, only one person went to AMS conference.

Seth felt the issue went back to the point that the root definition of authentic Montessori education also causes confusion.

Pat mentioned that a big influx of folks going to the training, it needs to be a discussion. Pat discussed the purposeful nature of Rocket night and that helped folks understand it better.

Conversations/communication needs to be had to help encourage keeping some desired Montessori education initiatives.

The next growth needs to be polished up so details can address all the concerns.

Parents want to know why.

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Bill noted he thought trips were part of the Compass DNA. However they weren't implemented uniformly. And the practitioners were making decisions on a local level. Due to Compass's complex nature, there are many different decisions being made on a local level.

Conversation will continue. Mike recommended to staff reaching out to staff.

Denver School of Arts Handbook is 62 pages long but it defines each piece of curriculum and the cost. It sets expectations and builds understanding. This could be created for Compass.

Bill offered to get feedback from the staff.

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5) New Business (5 mins)

- a) Status of Bingo License Renewal (5 mins) – Jeff Smith
 - i) License will get renewed Nov. 1. Jeff asked that the board to support bingo. Attendance and support is low. Bill wants bingo to be a part of our culture. Compass bumper stickers are also being created.

6) Old Business (None)

- 7) Adjourn: Eileen moved, Rebecca seconded (as well as everyone else). Unanimously approved.**

Next meeting:

Tuesday, August 23, 2016, 6pm, Wheat Ridge Campus

PARKING LOT:

- (a) Temporary Facilities Working Group Update/Planning
- (b) Policy and Handbook Updates
- (c) Executive Director Evaluation
- (d) Graduate tracking
- (e) Bingo reporting

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