

# **Mountain Sage Community School**

## **Board Meeting Minutes**

Date: March 5, 2020, 6:00-7:00 p.m.

Location: Mountain Sage Community School

### **Mountain Sage Community School Board of Directors**

**2310 East Prospect Rd. Suite A, Fort Collins, CO 80525 \* Phone 970-568-5456 \* Fax 970-797-1202**

**March 5, 2020 \* Special Board Meeting Minutes**

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#### **A. Opening, 6:00 p.m.**

##### **A1. Call to Order**

**Beau Bump called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.**

Beau: Introduction with some discussion around scope and format of the board meeting (Recent Kindergarten Class Parent Email Communications and Concerns Raised).

##### **A2. Attendance & Introductions**

- Present: Beau Bump, Jon Pointer, Mary Wolf, Eric Richardson, Bryan Kimbell, Liv Helmericks
- Absent: Melinda Kerst (excused)
- Guests: Hillary Menke, Jennie McArthur-Salyer, Kate Vanderleek, Kirsten Hundley, John Wilson, Anne Wilson, Hillary Mizia, Santa Heineman, Rebecca Rambo, Josh Green, Jeff Wol, Scott Christensen, Hugo Rascon, Eva Foxton, Sara K. Woll, Angie Tiernen, Rob Tiernen, Lori Morgan, Arther Fairburn, Jessica Rayburn, Jenny Haye, Kip Haye, Shelly Bond, Chris West

##### **A3. Our Mission: Cultivating the Creative Mind**

##### **A4. Public Comment (3 minutes per person, Limit 20 minutes total) - 6:14pm**

- **Josh Green**
  - Is there a place where we can see school policies and procedures?
  - Are there specific policy exceptions addressing this issue?
  - If this is not the appropriate place for specific questions, and e-mail is not, when is the best way to speak about?
  - Does the board have a policy that addresses how this will be worked out?
- **Rebecca Rambo**
  - Been at the school for a while and when things have come up over the years she has felt that often the response has been a cold response. Was floored that she was not notified when a serious situation occurred in the classroom that she was not notified immediately. Feel like that could have been communicated without breaking confidentiality. She brings her children to school assuming they are safe. Feel like if something is swept under the rug that we are missing an opportunity to come together as a community. Concerns over need for additional support in the classroom (needing intensive support for some children). Expressed concern that when her child has complained about something bad happening that a child is simply pulled away.

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- Chris West
  - Children went through River Song where they experienced a lot of change there and they have had some ways to cope with change, via songs or other . Since January he has been hearing from his son that there have been some dynamics such as “you aren’t my friend unless you do X”. Feel like we should embrace this opportunity to have the same language around friendship, disagreements, and supporting each other. The way that we communicate with each other, such as in this incident, that they see the way that parents are interacting. Some measures such as taking away silks or allowing forts to be built may be a quick “stop the bleeding” solution, but hopefully we have a better long-term solution, but also hope that we can have a way to communicate with children in a way that helps them understand the changes that are happening.
- Jenny Haye
  - Lack of communication makes it hard to implement positive change.
  - Huge disconnect with a family leaving.
  - Feel like there should be a way to communicate
  - Want to feel like our kids are safe.
  - She wants to feel like she is enabled to make her own decision, but the lack of communication makes it difficult.
- Kirsten Hundley
  - Feel like the class has not made an attempt to connect as a classroom outside of school before now. Would really like it if the class could come together without a reason like this.
  - It’s very difficult at this school, and other schools, to monitor everything going on at all times.
  - The teachers and staff are here every day doing their best.
  - Recommend reading the parent handbook so Everyone is empowered and aware. Feel like it could make us a stronger community.
- Santa Heineman
  - Would like to think that we were just notified a little too soon, and that the class would have been notified if the process had not been high-jacked. Happy for the “no fort” rule, having been a teacher in the past and knowing that things do happen if there’s no direct line of sight. Said her son has seen things happen on the playground in plain site. Deeply saddened by the incident, and don’t have all the information, but also don’t feel like she should have all the information. If her child was the victim or the offender she would want there to be some confidentiality and room for restoration and healing. Would like to think that once the process had played out that they would have been notified as parents and that it could be discussed with the children in some safe way. Assume that teachers and staff were taking measures to be extra watchful.
  - Sad that the family is not at our school anymore.
- Liv Helmericks

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- Thanked Everyone that shared. Thanked the families that showed up tonight.
- Scott Christensen
  - Don't know exactly what happened and do not necessarily want to know what happened but want to know how they should help their children deal with whatever is going on. What conversation should they be having?
- Lauren Morgan
  - If we are only hearing what is happening through the rumor mill, if there is no mechanism or timeline for parents to be spoken to, how are we supposed to know how to support our children and maintain confidentiality?

### **B. Preliminary Matters, 6:45 p.m.**

#### **B1. Approve Meeting Agenda**

**MOTION:** Mary moved to approve the agenda, Bryan seconded

**VOTE:** Unanimously approved.

### **C. Business, 6:45 p.m.**

#### **C1. Recent Kindergarten Class Parent Email Communications and Concerns Raised**

- Liv: Hear Everyone's desire to be told about situations that occur. But maintaining confidentiality for children is of the highest priority.
  - Understand people are struggling with the confidentiality piece.
  - We have a natural desire to want to be informed.
  - As a small community it is a tricky situation.
  - We rely on Child Protective Services for their guidance on the procedure once they are contacted.
  - When we are dealing with a situation we are working with the children, the parents, using restorative practices.
  - Believe that as they work with those families and outside agencies they try to take a holistic approach that includes safety.
  - There are resources out there that can help with discussions about situations like this and how to approach them with your children.
  - Every situation is different and requires a unique approach.
  - Nobody feels good when something bad happens. Want you to know how seriously we take this. Consider it a huge responsibility to teach the children and keep them safe.
  - Always looking for ways to improve our process and apply it to be better next time.
  - Think questions about additional support staff are legitimate and will be taken under consideration.

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- Creating spaces that are safe and highly visible are the current priorities and will always remain so.
- Having discussions with children about appropriate boundaries in the classroom.
- Jon Pointer
  - From a process standpoint and questions regarding communications. Certainly there have been incidents in classrooms over the years. Every time something happens we have to go through PSD and Mountain Sage policies to see what applies for that incident. Also what makes sense in terms of addressing the situation with the rest of the class. Some have been dealt with in a very private manner maintaining confidentiality. Sometimes it makes sense for teachers to approach families to communicate in a manner that maintains confidentiality that something has occurred, this is what you might hear from your children, and how you might deal with it.
  - We as an organization are continually trying to learn from situations, reviewing our policies, and if necessary making changes.
- Angie Tierne
  - Have been lucky enough to be able to volunteer. Her child's 3rd grade class has a lot of volunteers. Would like to see this more in the kindergarten classroom.
- Anne Dunnigan
  - If lack of supervision is an issue in the classroom, then volunteers cannot be the answer. If we determine that is an issue, what are the long-term solutions we can implement?
- Rebecca Rambo
  - Thankful for ways that some classroom safety has been addressed, but when your child is getting hit repeatedly and it just keeps happening, what steps are in place to stop it?
- Josh Green
  - Appreciate the way that the issue last year regarding suicide was handled in terms of communication so that they were aware and kept informed throughout the ordeal.
- Rob Tiernen
  - Want to thank everyone who came tonight. Things are going to happen. Our children are young, and the consequences get bigger. Hope that being here, collectively we can make a difference.
- Santa Heineman
  - Do Jennie or Hillary feel like additional staff support will make a difference?
- Jennie McArthur-Salyer
  - Safety is a priority. Kindergartners are still learning appropriate boundaries and impulse control. There are a lot of issues, and a lot of redirections going on. It's not all about a lack of resources. Sometimes even with a lot of adults in the

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room things can happen suddenly. It is helpful to have more volunteers sometimes, particularly with large spaces it can be a help. Now that we are aware this behavior was in the classroom because of the situation, we are more diligent and cautious of behaviors.

- Miss Menke has been telling some lovely stories to try and help the students bond.
- Jenny Haye
  - It seemed like one parent reported something, and another parent reported something days later, and that parent was not aware that something had occurred?
  - Liv (response): When they became aware that something occurred they immediately put a call in to CPS. The norm is parent notification, but each scenario is different and in this scenario it was appropriate to report to CPS.
- Bryan Kimball
  - **AI:** Board - Perhaps a takeaway from this meeting could be to publish the Mountain Sage specific policies that have been approved, and identify those policies that are pending approval.
  - The public is always welcome to all board meetings.
  - Please have your voice heard year-round. Please come to our board meetings.
- Sara K. Woll.
  - Maybe something that could help and would not violate student privacy is if some materials could be sent home about the kinds of things going on. It could be very helpful to help parents have discussions with their children. Perhaps there are materials that could help parents have conversations about consent and appropriate boundaries.
- Josh Green
  - Willing to make a Facebook group for this group where they could share resources.
- John Wilson
  - Would warn against pathologizing bad behavior in K (5 & 6 year olds). Want to make sure that the board is hearing the concern of confidence in leadership by the community. Would like that at the end of this process the issue of parent's confidence in the leadership is addressed. From the comments in the room it seems less like a crisis of the issue itself but more a crisis of confidence in leadership response.
- Chris West
  - We need to react and we are.
  - Step back and look at research about what can really help in the classroom, that we not just look within the Mountain Sage community for a solution.
- Santa Heineman
  - Wondering if there would have been communication out to the community once resolution was reached? Don't need the details. Maybe the parents do not

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even need to be told that something happened, but would hope that information could at least be provided to help there be healthy discussions with their children that are relevant. Seems like there needs to be a way to inform parents without breaching confidentiality.

- Kirsten Hundley
  - Regarding school communications, an example might be "Hey, this is a behavior that is starting to happen (like inappropriate touching)." Seems like a general communication around certain kinds of behavior could be done without breaching confidentiality. Engage parents to have discussions with their children.
- Hillary Mizia
  - One repeating theme for an action item that seems clear is that a communication from the school with resources of how to speak with their children is desired.
- Jon Pointer
  - Really important to remember what Liv said, that the norm is that any time a situation like this comes up we review all policies and procedures that pertain to the situation and act appropriately. Each situation is different, and the policy may be applied in a different way to handle it.
  - **AI:** Board - Review policies of how the school operates in these scenarios that are outside of our norm, such as when we engage these outside agencies. Make sure we better understand procedures on how we navigate that, abide by legal obligations, and still communicate where possible.

#### **D. Closing, 6:55 p.m.**

##### **D1. List Assigned Action Items**

- **AI:** Liv - A communication from the school to the parents with resources of how to speak with their children about this particular issue.
- **AI:** Board - Review policies of how the school operates in these scenarios that are outside of our norm, such as when we engage these outside agencies. Make sure we better understand procedures on how we navigate that, abide by legal obligations, and still communicate where possible.
- **AI:** Board - Create an action plan to address confidence in school leadership communication.
- **AI:** Board - Post all approved policies on the website. Any pending policies will be listed with a date for approval and when they will be posted.
- **AI:** Liv - Communicate back to the Kindergarten class the results of our action items.

##### **D2. Call for Final Comments**

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- Mary: All of the meeting agendas and minutes will be available on the website as soon as they are approved by the board in the next meeting, or by special vote.

D3. Move to Adjourn

**Board meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m.**

D4. Closing Verse:

*Steadfast I stand in existence.  
With certainty I tread life's path.  
Love I cherish in the depths of my being.  
Hope I place in every deed.  
Confidence I place in every thought.*

*These five guide me through existence.  
These five guide me to the goal.*