

Community Meeting September 10, 2008

Greetings by Angela Manning, Head of School
Facilitator: Shona Simpson

1. Farmer's Daughter Lunch Program - Liz Meadows
 - ◆ Recap: This 3rd party business will be making natural and organic lunches available for purchase by TMS families (as voted for last Spring). All questions regarding the lunch program, payment, etc are to go to the Farmer's Daughter directly.
 - ◆ Registration is open now at www.organiclunchkids.com for start date of Oct.20th.
 - ◆ It is up to the parents to choose those lunch items that fall within TMS guidelines.
 - ◆ Question was raised regarding milk. Angela clarified that State rules for require preschool children to have milk in lunches. If your child does not drink milk you should send a note for the child's file.

2. NLI: Natural Learning Initiative – Liz Meadows
 - ◆ Liz introduces schematic plan and updates us on her experience at the workshop and assures parents of the plan in store. She had an exhilarating experience learning further how NLI can create a true outdoor learning environment for our campus. Anticipation of the outdoor classroom and description of details.
 - ◆ Friday Sept. 26th children's workshop announced
 - ◆ Monday, November 10th final presentation. Will include presentation of full plan. This will be November's Community Meeting. Please note date change from 11/11.
 - ◆ This 5-10 year project will be implemented in stages. Funding will be critical to the success of the project.

3. Middle School Committee – Keith Stirewalt
 - ◆ Committee still hopes to see project fulfilled and hopes to initiate the endeavor in 2010. Plan to establish separate non-profit organization. They welcome any participation in joining the critical mass.
 - ◆ Remaining parental interest in Initiative and question of how individuals can participate to further the interest. Discussion of appropriate relations between Initiative and current MS community.
 - Questions asked concerning communication and publicity of Middle School Initiative and appropriate and respectful boundaries between the Initiative and established school community.

4. Follow up to Summer meeting with Middle School Committee - Al Andrews, Board President
 - ◆ Brings new parents up to speed in discussion of opening and enrollment of higher grades. Tells of Board of Trustee governing body. Reports of the Middle School Initiative meeting and explains Board response. Lists examples of the checklist of many needs of TMS to accommodate growth of school. Al handed out a letter explaining in detail where the board and school is at this point:

SEE LETTER INSERTED BELOW:

The Montessori School

September 9, 2008

Dear Montessori School Community:

In mid-summer, members of the Montessori School's Board of Trustees and Administration met with a group of parents who are interested in and were investigating the creation of a Montessori Middle School. At that meeting trustees and administrators provided feedback to the group on the school's position regarding the feasibility of creating a Middle School program for the academic year 2010-11. I will highlight several of the matters covered.

The parents who formed the exploration committee have done yeomen's work researching, organizing, and preparing a thorough presentation on the many aspects of starting a Montessori-based middle school. Hopefully, many if not all of you got to view their presentation during the last community meeting or at some other time. Their product and input was very valuable to the Board and the administration as we analyzed the proposal's feasibility.

The Board bears many responsibilities to this school and the community. Guided by the Blueprint, it must analyze the school's progress, review proposals for future endeavors, and provide leadership for fundraising efforts. From that perspective, the Board thoroughly reviewed the middle school initiative's proposal. Based on careful review and assessment, the Board feels that at this time the Administration, our current resources and debt obligations are maximized. Strategically, as stewards of the school's mission, we must remain focused on the unanticipated increased demand that we have in our toddler and elementary areas. A quality Montessori experience in all of our programs is always a top priority. This summer our toddler program's waiting pool grew significantly and our elementary program has seen exponential growth in student population. We continue to put the resources necessary towards the support of the Elementary program, purchasing top of the line Montessori educational materials. After substantial assessment, we agree that it would not be prudent to commit our currently very limited resources to the creation of a new program while there are pressing demands in our current programs as well as significant debt obligations.

Although support for our current educational programs continues to blossom, we have not met our fundraising goal for our Annual Fund of \$50,000 in either of the past two years and any dilution of these efforts could reverse the progress we have made over the past 24 months. It must be kept in mind that just over 24 months ago this school was in significant financial and enrollment distress and currently operates with no endowment and no significant financial reserves. The Board does embrace the need to strategically plan for a Middle School to meet the Community's desire to extend the Montessori experience into these adolescent years. We take seriously the possibility of providing an educational possibility for this age group. Yet, at such a critical developmental stage of our school, the creation of a new program can neither be undertaken nor created to the level of quality we expect for our students in such a short period of time.

In collaboration with Head of School, Angela Manning, we are aggressively analyzing our demand and program quality to ensure we continue to deliver a quality experience to our current families, which is indeed an area of expertise as a school. The Board has agreed to continue to progress on a detailed strategic plan and your presentation and information will continue be a resource for this effort. In addition, the Board of Trustees has slated that the topic be on the agenda for the December 2008 board meeting for review alongside the forecast for growth through the 2012-2013 school year.

We certainly understand that the exploration committee members' efforts were sincere and substantial. While the school may not be currently prepared to embrace the endeavor, who knows what the future holds? We may one day be better able to incorporate the goal of starting a middle school into our long range planning. In the meantime, we encourage not only potential middle school parents, but

also all Montessori community members, to continue to contribute their efforts and ideas to our vibrant and growing community.

*Respectfully,
Al Andrews on behalf of the Board of Trustees*

- ◆ Speaks of Blueprint as the governance document and cites examples that support Board's current ruling. Frank discussion of school's financial standing and future requirements ensues.

6. Proposed Items on Agenda for Next Community Meeting

- ◆ Annamarie Edwards: Spanish update
- ◆ If the Middle School Exploration Committee has anything to share with the community they will do so.