

French & Montessori Education, Inc.  
Board meeting  
Saturday, June 28, 2008  
Broadway Campus

The meeting was called to order at 10:20 a.m. by Chairman Carlos Zervigon. In attendance also were Edwin Shorty, Laura Watts, Olivier Brochenin, Ken Ducote and board secretary Sharon Nossiter. Board member Teddi Locke was excused, but assigned her proxy to Carlos Zervigon for all votes at the June 28 meeting.

I. The minutes of the May 2008 meeting were approved, with three clarifications.

Laura Watts was formerly the Budget Committee Chair, not a non-voting member of the FAME Board. Allen Miller should have been listed as excused, not Allen Wood. And board members who are not present at meetings are listed as excused, not absent. Edwin Shorty moved the minutes be accepted as amended; Ken Ducote seconded the motion. Unanimous approval.

II. Administration Update:

Montessori Director Ellen Selvidge reviewed plans for teacher training this summer. Early childhood group teachers have completed one week and have two more visits in the fall, then will be certified in December. The upper elementary group started training this summer, a 2-1/2 year process leading to certification in 2010. Three teachers are currently in Houston attending training, and Ellen will go to Houston in July to finish her administration training, with the expectation of certification with a Montessori administration credential in December. Beth Rosch has completed her oral exams and will become the first new teacher to get her credential, in January.

III. Approval of Revised 2008-2009 Calendar

Principal Janice Dupuy discussed the necessity of revising the 2008-2009 school calendar. The State of Louisiana changed the LEAP testing dates to April, the week before Easter, instead of March, requiring an adjustment to our calendar. Also, the original calendar had teachers reporting for 189 days, over the required 183 days. And, we had 1,800 additional instructional minutes than required by the charter.

The administration worked with the teachers, especially the leadership team of Chalita Laurent and Cheryl Jones, on the calendar. To reduce the 6 additional reporting days, we reduced some of our professional development days. To reduce the instructional minutes, we reinstated early dismissal on Fridays for students, although teachers are required to remain the additional hour. The teaching assistants will be available to help in after-care for the extra students who might stay due to early dismissal.

In addition, the Broadway campus will start five minutes earlier, and Carrollton will dismiss five minutes later. The first and last days of school remain the same.

Laura Watts asked about the matter of having no break in the fall semester until November. Business manager Alisa Dupre said the teachers' leadership team voted down an earlier break, and noted that we will be off on Election Day, Nov. 4.

Ken Ducote moved approval of the changed calendar. Edwin Shorty seconded the motion.

Input from members of the public who were present concerned the question of after-care for the extra hour on Fridays. Janice said that even on half days, after-care is available. A second question raised was that of having the half days on Thursdays, the concern being that there would be high absenteeism on Fridays because of people taking long weekends. Ms. Cheryl said Thursday was the better option because when report card conferences are held on the afternoons of the half days, they often go into the evenings to accommodate working parents. Teachers wanted to avoid long Friday evenings, and were unsure if parents would attend report card conferences on Friday nights, she said.

The revised calendar was approved unanimously.

Janice further noted that the campuses are officially closed right now, and will reopen July 14. Summer hours will be 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Regular hours resume Aug. 6.

#### IV. Approval of the 2008-2009 Budget:

Laura reported the good news that are Minimum Foundation Program numbers are higher than we had budgeted, at \$7,923 per student rather than \$7,500. This allows us to lower our fundraising needs to \$245,000, and ensures a line-item for a second grade French teaching assistant. She had problems with substitute teacher funding and increased that line as well as some other allocations.

She reminded everyone that the preK programs are funded only if the students are LA4 or gifted. However, as we do not base entry to the program on gifted status, the preK is vastly underfunded. That is all of the budget deficit, essentially, she said. If we were getting paid for all of the students in preK, we'd have a budget surplus.

Carlos noted that this creates a big necessity for fundraising, and stretches the rest of the program to provide the unfunded preK.

Janice made the point that when the trial budget included a \$350,000 deficit, there was grumbling about a lack of responsibility. The administration purposely forecasts the budget under what it thinks the MFP will be in the interests of responsible budgeting, so the school doesn't wind up with a true deficit. We want to do what is in the best interests of the students, she said, but also be responsible for sound budgeting under the terms of the school's charter.

Alisa noted that if we can't raise the \$245,000 in fundraising needs this year, it will become a budget deficit next year. Carlos agreed that all fundraising needs must be eliminated in the 2009-2010 budget.

Laura moved accepting the budget as recommended; Ken seconded the motion.

Public comment:

Parents asked about the possibility of charging for preK 3 and 4, or charging an administrative fee to offset the cost of the program. Carlos said any decisions would be a group effort involving FAME, the PTO Board, teachers and administration.

Some second-grade French parents expressed concern about class size for the coming year. The class will have a full-time teaching assistant. Hal Fairbanks asked if parents could raise money for a second teacher's salary. Carlos suggested talking to the administration and PTO about dedicated fund-raising. Edwin noted that the administration would need the assurance of the money well in advance in order to plan and recruit a new teacher.

The budget was approved unanimously.

#### V. Update on Nominations

Carlos proposed talking to potential candidates now in order to set up meetings for September. All current board members' terms expire in December, so it is necessary to begin recruitment now.

#### VI. Legislative Update

To be addressed in September.

#### VII. Discussion of Upcoming Millage Election

Assistant principal Dawn Collins has attended meetings with representatives of the RSD, NOPS and the charter schools. The millage renewal election is July 19. It is essential to renew the millage, which covers textbooks and instructional supplies, early childhood programs, salaries and benefits, and capital and facilities. Without the renewal, ACS could lose up to \$1,000 per child. Only about 20,000 people are expected to vote. The good news is no opposing groups are forming. The school proposes a mail-out at the end of June to ask Audubon families to ask people to vote, and reminding them that this is not a tax increase, but a renewal.

At 11:05 a.m., Laura moved to adjourn, seconded by Edwin. Unanimous approval.

Minutes prepared by Board secretary Sharon Nossiter