

# **Madrone Trail Public Charter School**

Jackson County, Oregon

Special Board Meeting Work Session Parental/Family Leave Policy

Wednesday, March 1, 2017 at 3:00-5:00 pm

Madrone Trail Public Charter School – 3070 Ross Lane, Medford, OR 97502

## **I. Call to order/ Roll call**

[Facilitator Name] called to order the Special Board Meeting Work Session Parental/Family Leave Policy at 3:00 pm at Madrone Trail Public Charter School 3070 Ross Ln. Central Point, OR 97502.

Sarah conducted a roll call. The following persons were present: Amy Gygax, Sarah Trujillo, Jane Higgins, Leann Tourzan, Kellee O'Shea

Karen Bailey (Administrator), Dara Nikolic, Michelle Coull, Hilary Lowenberg

Absent- Monica Rathjen, Louise Lavergne

## **II. Opening verse**

- III. Faculty Input Amy Gygax** Thank you for coming, I know it fun to go straight from one meeting to another. **Hillary Lowenberg** Thank you for inviting us. Its been a long time coming, it's wonderful. **Amy Gygax** What we had planned to do today is to provide an opportunity to get feedback and input from the faculty and then discuss some of the research that some of us have done on way to fund family leave. We will brainstorm about that, and you are welcome to stay for that as well. **Michelle Coull** Can I ask where we are in the process, are you getting this together so you can do an official policy? I know that this year it has come up, and just curious are you forming the policy? **Amy Gygax** The place that we were before, is that we were moving ahead with the plan that Karen put came up with, which was creating a Family Support Fund with the rollover of unused sick and personal days. We had the two different proposals brought to the board and we had supported as the board as far as funding. Then Jane suggested that we have a work session, and brainstorm about other ideas. The intention is to then form a policy, so that is where we are heading. **Michelle Coull** One of the things I have shared before that I want share is that we'd been asked as the faculty by Joe Frodsham if we want to use the unused sick and personal days to pool into a emergency fund, and we had said yes to that. Our understanding was that there was already a fund. Coming into the beginning of this year, we were told that did not exist. **Amy Gygax** No. I never heard about that from Joe. **Michelle Coull** That is something that we would want. **Hillary Lowenberg** I just want to give you a little background.

Dara and I were on the Family Leave Committee, and we've been working since August, and we've met with Hannah Jackson and Cori Royer. We came up with a draft policy, we put a lot of time and consideration into it. We brought it to the faculty, we talked about it, and it went back to the committee, and then we were asked to sit in on budget committee to find some money that way. It went back to the faculty and then back to the committee. We have done a lot, and this has been a long time coming, so coming to the board feels very beneficial for you to hear and us to be able to talk to you about it. I think there was some misunderstanding about having two different policies that were brought to you. From the Parental Leave Committee, we thought "Great, we have another idea, we have our idea, let's bring them both together and see if the board can work together with these two ideas, and come up with something that suits all of our needs." From our perspective, we didn't understand it to be an either or, we are still feeling like there are a lot of things within the second proposal that are not sitting right in terms of all the things we are looking for in terms of policy. My question is if we can revisit some of the things that were in our proposal, to make sure that they are part of the policy moving forward. **Amy Gyax** We would love to. Can you tell me what those things are? **Dara Nikolic** What I would love to see, is starting from the proposal that we created, and then altering it, if number of weeks needs to be reduced, then those things can be changed. But other things like unpaid leave, that a teacher could take up to a year of unpaid leave, and still come back to their class. **Hillary Lowenberg** We were originally asking for 12 weeks, and that is something I am feeling strong about. I have done a lot of research, I have been a doula, and feel strongly that having that 4<sup>th</sup> trimester, and a mother having time to bond, and develop latching with a child. The baby is developing stomach and brain, and I feel strongly that 12 weeks for the mother and a month for the father for parental leave. We also asked about insuring that the teacher can take up to a year off unpaid after that, and that they are guaranteed the job that they were originally hired for. **Kellee O'Shea** Are you asking for the 12 weeks to be paid? **Hillary Lowenberg** Yes **Kellee O'Shea** Full salary? **Hillary Lowenberg** Ideally, yes **Dara Nikolic** Again, this was our ideal policy, so if the numbers need to change because of what we can find in the budget, starting from the extra days, it's tough, because I know it is not common in the U.S. to get 12 weeks paid. In some ways, it's asking a lot, but I also feel, especially as Waldorf teachers, the amount that we sacrifice for eight years from our own families, because of the need of learning a new curriculum every year, and the depth that we work with these children and families, and the pay that we get compared to public school teachers, it is a wonderful and appropriate reward to be able to spend that time with a new child. Especially knowing that after that 12 weeks you will be right back in it, or maybe you won't go back to work, and take that year unpaid, but then you are there with your students so much, and we give so much of ourselves to this school and students. It feels very fair to me to have that idea of 3 months that you can take. I was lucky to be able to take that over the summer, and I don't know what I would have done otherwise. If there is a way that we can find it between those extra sick and personal days and other budget categories that we aren't using as much. I do feel like this is a unique year that we have so many teachers having babies at the same time, we could go another five or ten years, before anyone using it, so that fund could grow. Hopefully it would grow enough so that when we need it the funds would be there. **Jane Higgins** Did you ask for that money to accrue in

your proposal? **Hillary Lowenberg** We didn't ask for any money, we just came up with what we wanted. **Jane Higgins** If one year wasn't used, you didn't have it in the policy built to stay in that fund, and not be used elsewhere **Dara Nikolic** We didn't but we could. We hadn't really put any of the financial piece into it. **Hillary Lowenberg** Also, flexibility when coming back to school. That would be a case by case basis, but having the flexibility to have part-time. **Dara Nikolic** I think that we had it in there that the teacher would be participating if finding their sub. I think we had also said that you would have to have worked at the school for two years minimum to qualify for this. **Sarah Trujillo** This is only for full-time? **Hillary Lowenberg** We are talking about full-time teachers. **Jane Higgins** Was there a percentage for part-time teachers? **Hillary Lowenberg** We didn't get that far. **Dara Nikolic** We also asked that they retain health benefits. **Amy Gyax** For the paid time, or for the year of unpaid time? **Dara Nikolic** I think just for the paid time, for the 12 weeks. **Amy Gyax** That would make sense, that if you were getting paid you would still have your benefits. **Hillary Lowenberg** Hannah wasn't able to come, she has felt really stressed out by the whole process this year. Really feeling uncertain if she was coming back, and how many weeks she would have, but she wrote a letter, and I will read it, and leave it here. (reads letter) She also wanted me to reiterate that if we decide to just go forward the plan that was adopted, that we go through it with a fine-tooth comb, to help put in the things that were not in it. Also, one of her points was, as faculty one of the things we heard was that we usually use all of our sick and personal leave. We almost always use it all, maybe there a couple days that are left at the end of the year, but is that enough to ensure that a mother or father is covered, when it is their time to take parental leave. I say that my personal perspective is that is absolutely not, if we are thinking of using it in the next year. **Kellee O'Shea** How many days do you get? **Hillary Lowenberg** We have 7 days of sick days, and 3 personal per year. **Michelle Coull** If you don't use them they are gone, but they don't roll over. **Sarah Trujillo** With this they would to a general fund **Dara Nikolic** Which Joe always said was rolled over to an emergency fund. I wanted to add to what Hannah alluded to, which is hugely important. If we able to offer something like this, as far as retaining and attracting good teachers its huge. Having something like this will help us keep great teachers that might otherwise might feel like they are not taken care of, and not respected, and just to Central Point Elementary where they can get paid better. **Kellee O'Shea** What is the policy in Central Point? Do we have the Medford School District Policy? **Dara Nikolic** It is the Family Medical Leave Act, so it's the federal one. **Kellee O'Shea** So they just get the 12 weeks? **Amy Gyax** Medford follows the federal law. **Dara Nikolic** But their pay scale is significantly higher. **Amy Gyax** It is, and if we had more money we would have a higer pay scale, so that's the difficulty. I mean, I fully support paid maternity leave, I believe mother should be able to take time off, I believe that you are not paid enough, and I also don't know where we have any money to fund something like this. We have a lot of competing needs, and that is the difficulty, here, for me. I don't know where to get that money to up aside. From what I've researched as far as paid maternity leave where it is implemented, it's usually a paid into program, people get money taken out of their paychecks for a certain amount of time, and then it pools up, and when people need it out, they can take it. So, it is difficult to start it without having built up this fund over time like you thought it was being built up. **Dara Nikolic** So there is no emergency fund? **Amy Gyax** No, there has is not. **Michelle Coull** That came up early in the year, that there was speculation about where that money went, but it's not in the

budget. **Dara Nikolic** I would have thought he put that into the contingency fund. **Karen Bailey** Whatever was left at the end of the year, I think went to teacher bonuses. **Michelle Coull** So, like Hillary said, the bulk of the days got used? **Karen Bailey** There were about a third of the days that were not used. **Amy** And that got rolled into a general fund for next year, and got distributed **Dara Nikolic** I know he had a large contingency fund, maybe that was part of that fund. **Michelle Coull** A contingency is a separate thing. **Amy Gygax** It's a separate thing, and we must have two months operating expenses. We really should have more **Karen Bailey** \$15,000, and about \$10,000 or \$11,000 have been used.

**Kellee O'Shea** What about short-term disability? Were you offered that? My understanding is that, and I do agree that you should be able to have paid time off, and the way that the country is focused the way it is. But I know what is working for other people in Oregon right now is you get your 12 weeks, and Oregon has supplemental time off that you are allowed to take, I think it is 6 months and then you can distribute that time into part time work if you wish. You could push that into another year of working part-time, and getting a little bit of income. None of that is paid for. I also know a lot of people that pay into short-term disability, and short-term disability pays 60% of your income for six weeks. That has been what has been a standard across the country and in my research of what it is in Oregon. In my mind, that seems to be the best policy in place that I have become aware of. **Amy Gygax** I do want to touch on something that Hillary brought up when we looked at the two different policies, that we thought we were choosing between, we didn't really adopt one, we said this is what we felt like we could support because it had some sort of funding mechanism in it. It wasn't like just that policy is all we can approve, we can incorporate other things. In my research and considering the Family Medical Leave Act I realized that it only qualifies if you have 50 or more employees, and we don't have that. That means we really don't have any protection for our faculty. It goes without saying that we support you taking time off when you are having a baby, but that doesn't give you a sense of security. So, I agree that we can offer that you are guaranteed to have a job for taking a year off. Whatever way we move forward, that proposal is not all that we can do. It was the intention to move forward and create a policy and make sure that we are meeting the needs with that policy, and really spell out exactly what we are doing. **Dara Nikolic** I feel like that would be huge. Even if it were six weeks. If we had a policy, that was something that we could offer, and job security, I think that would be a huge step from what we have right now. **Michelle Coull** When something like this comes up, like when the Sabbatical came up. It's a huge piece of our conversation, and we didn't have that in place before, and the is something that in some ways is amazing. We had a really clear process that Katherine led, that brought that about. I think that what I am hearing from the faculty is that we would like to have a really clear process, knowing that the budget has been looked through, with this being the priority in the budget for next year. Not just a nebulous budget that everything is already spoken for, but that someone is going through looking specifically with this in mind. **Dara Nikolic** If there are sick

days, or maybe unused training, if we can supplement and get creative. **Michelle Coull** I know that yes, if you had your wish, that we would be getting paid more, but with that in mind, it doesn't give us the flexibility to save ourselves, that is why it is also a strong need from us. **Amy Gygax** I think it is reasonable to look carefully through the budget, but to be completely honest, from a board perspective, I see other really strong needs in our school financially as well. I know this a big wish, and a strong thing coming from the faculty, but I also feel there is a lot of competing needs at this moment. So, I want to be honest, that when I am looking at the budget, I am going to be thinking of other things as well. **Hillary Lowenberg** I think we are too, we came up as the faculty trying to prioritize budget items that we really wanted to make sure that when we came to the board that you knew where we were standing, we work every day so closely together, and with the children, and we ranked it, and I just want to reiterate that second on the list is family leave. It is such a high priority, that we as a faculty are willing to let go of some other things that maybe already exist, or could be reallocated, to make sure that our teachers are supported. **Amy Gygax** Do you have ideas of where? **Michelle Coull** When we order our supplies for the next year, we do not get a catalog that has prices in it, so we don't know as we are ordering supplies. As we are spending money as a school on different programs, we are not aware of what we are spending. For example, eurhythmy. I hear in the background that eurhythmy is expensive, and it is something that I feel is highly valuable. Would I have given it up so that Hannah felt loved and supported all the way through, and financially stable? Yeah. So, it's that kind of thing. I don't know how much we spent on eurhythmy. Would I give that toward the four people for maternity leave? Yes, I would be very willing to do that. Absolutely. And I hear what you're saying, that the boards role is to have an overarching financial and legal view, and you are going to hold that no matter what. You are going to listen to the different parties, but you want to hold that piece. But yeah, we would be willing, and would love to be asked if we are going to do this, what we would have to give up. We hear this conversation that Carols husband is working with the financial piece as to see when he's going to come in and help with us. That is something that is being posed to the faculty, that you've got these pieces of the pie, and if you decide on this, then something else has to go. I think we would be very willing and responsive if you wanted to ask on that kind of thing. **Dara Nikolic** Again, this is such a long term, and pertaining to retaining good teachers, and the three teachers that are going on leave this year, they are covered, we figured it out. It could be three years before the next person even needs it. In that way, it might not even cost us anything for a while, if we have that fund. There are going to be times when we don't necessarily need it, and we can shuffle things around. I feel like for the long term, we need to have something in place so that people feel like at least they know that they will have health insurance, or that they will be able to come back to their class when they are ready. **Hillary Lowenberg** We were asked to look at the budget, like an informal budget committee, and Karen

brought up that there is a lot of money in the teacher training section. There is \$60,000. I was gifted to start a Waldorf training program last summer that was \$2400, and I was also given a stipend for living and food, which was really generous and wonderful, but I, and the faculty I think, it was the lowest on our priority list is Waldorf certification. If I'm able to get \$3000 to go to a two-week training in Portland, but it was unclear if Hannah was going to get \$8000, to have a baby. There are some interesting allocations for money in terms of certification. Also, the conferences. There was \$8000 to go to a conference in Sacramento, versus \$8000 for Hannah, and there were questions about that. Doing things like asking faculty what their financial priorities are make it clear in my mind that the faculty is supporting family leave over certifications and trainings. Not necessarily all, summer training is up there, and Art of Teaching, but if we're able to pay for Hannah to have Waldorf teacher certification, and we are able to pay for people to go on sabbatical, which is a gift, but we are not able to find money every once in a while, for a teacher to be at home with their child for twelve weeks? I feel like there is money out there if we can be smart about it. **Dara Nikolic** Right, and maybe, teacher certification, if we are getting our summer training, and somebody wants to go above and beyond, and get their Waldorf certification, that maybe the school pays for a portion of it, rather than the whole thing. **Michelle Coull** We were told that there was \$60,000 allocated for teacher development, and this year was the first year that we did an in-service so a few people, 3 or 4, went in January. So, we, as a group did not go down and spend the money that we have in the past. **Dara Nikolic** We did an in service with ourselves and all taught each other things. It was fantastic, and saved a lot of money. **Amy Gygax** Karen, is part of that fund to pay for mentoring? **Karen Bailey** No, that is separate. That is part of that \$146,000 soft money that we will not be seeing. That is where we are going to fall short if we don't make our soft money, which we are not going to make. It will have to come out of that teacher training fund. That \$60,000, will end up looking more like \$15,000. **Michelle Coull** And, we will know that in May? Is that when we know what we will actually get? **Karen Bailey** In June. **Amy Gygax** In June they give you the balance if they under paid us, and we are not guaranteed that they will give us anything. It is very challenging. They give us an estimate of what we will get, and they can change it. It is so frustrating. The way that education is funded in this country, and us as a charter school. **Hillary Lowenberg** It is interesting that this is happening during the Trump administration, because it has been fuel for the fire for us as women to really see where we can stand up for what we believe in, and support each other, where we work, in our communities, and as women. I think it is an amazing opportunity that the board at our school is all female. I think about my mom, who in 1985, she had six weeks off for maternity leave, and would drop me off a daycare, and cry leaving. Its 2017, we have this opportunity to really do something to support each other as women, and I think it's so great, it's the one silver lining. It's fueling my fire at least. How can we make a better world. **Amy Gygax** It

definitely would mean giving things up. That is the reality, it is at the sacrifice of other things. **Leann Tourzan** I hate to say it, but I might want to suggest to the faculty that we look at or alter the way that we do the sabbatical. That could be opening a big can of worms. **Amy Gygax** That is a conversation that we will have to have at another time. We have to review that policy, and how it is actually working. **Dara Nikolic** Whatever the paid leave would be, if you decided six weeks or eight weeks or whatever it is. I imagine six weeks being more realistic. That would be paid, and then you could have up to a year unpaid, and the stipulation that you could potentially pull from your sabbatical if you wanted to. So even if you took your whole sabbatical money, you would only have however much you had worked. So, if you worked four years, and went on maternity leave you would have four eighths of it. You could pull from some of that, and have extended paid leave, and then just not take a sabbatical, or just have whatever is left. **Michelle Coull** It's an interesting concept, and this is something that would have to be looked at if it is financially feasible. What I like about this is that we are not asking for funds above and beyond our salary and sabbatical. We would as an individual decide when to take the sabbatical funds. Again, if it is financially feasible, then we are not talking about someone having to choose between six weeks or eight weeks. There can be flexibility in that, where they can decide if they want to take a shorter or longer amount of time. **Dara Nikolic** And that is something that is already in the budget, so that could be a piece for the board to consider too. And obviously if you have only worked two year to qualify for parental leave you would only have two eighths of a salary, there wouldn't be that much, but you could use it. **Michelle Coull** you would only be eligible for how long you had been here. The financial question that I have, my understanding is that the school, right now, is saving up for us, because we are a double track, so we are not just the one salary that is being paid, in that there is going to be two salaries, and then they will hire on someone else. So, I think there might be \$40,000 or something like that is saved up for our sabbatical, so that is in place, so that is hard money. But when we are talking about the sabbatical piece, and somebody else, another year pulling from that piece, that is where it would be a question for me financially, if the school could do it. **Amy Gygax** The other question there for me, is that if you have a teacher that has worked her for two years, and you are saying that you can pull from the sabbatical that you would have gotten six years from now, and then they don't come back from maternity leave. That's pulling from something that they haven't actually fully earned. **Jane Higgins** But then it would be two eighths, if it is only two years. **Michelle Coull** Is part of the sabbatical say that you have to finish with your class. **Dara Nikolic** However, that would still be budgeted for, because whoever takes that class would only get the other six eighths. **Amy Gygax** But, we do not have it set aside already. **Dara Nikolic** So you would have to work for two years to get parental leave, and you have to work for four years, or six years to pull from sabbatical. That could be in there too, we could get creative. **Hillary Lowenberg** I

feel like that is a creative idea in addition, but I don't think that it's going to work for everybody. I think having some other pool or standard. I want to go back to that twelve weeks, and I know that Dara keeps changing it to six, I want to stick with twelve weeks. You know you are getting twelve weeks, you can count on it. Nine months and you are counting, you know you will have that money, and you don't have to start budgeting. So, if you need to take three more months because you don't want to leave your child, then you could potentially work something out if you have been there for four years. But I feel like we need to really get the pot of what we know we can do, so that we don't have to rely on that sabbatical part. **Michelle Coull** Maybe that sabbatical part could be only if the teacher is in 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade, so that the board could feel sure that the person is fulfilling what they have agreed to do. So, if a teacher is in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, they really don't know if they will come back. **Sarah Trujillo** And they could potentially have a second child, so then how do you count the years served if they took a big chunk in the middle of their employment? If they took some in second grade, do you give them credit for that, do you only give them a fraction of that, and then they are going to take another year, it adds complication. **Amy Gygax** As we are looking at that we need to keep in mind that the sabbatical is not a guarantee, so to be drawing out of something that is not necessarily going to happen can get tricky as well. It is nice to actually have a set amount that we do have some sort of funding for. **Hillary Lowenberg** Also, something for you to think about. Carol heard about some insurance policy that the school can take out. **Leann Tourzan** I was going to call about that when we are done here. **Karen Bailey** It is what Kellee was talking about, short term disability. **Hillary Lowenberg** The school can take it out, as opposed to an individual. That is what Siskiyou does, is that right? **Leann Tourzan** I think the school buys the insurance policy, and then I don't know how it works, if they take it out of salary or what. **Hillary Lowenberg** So, that would be something interesting to look at. **Kellee O'Shea** Most people pay, just like health insurance. **Hillary Lowenberg** That means you would need to be planning in advance. **Kellee O'Shea** Most people use that nine months to prepare and budget their salary. **Michelle Coull** For me when I started with a temporary contract with the district and I was at about \$40,000 a year, now I'm seven years here, and I'm at \$43,000. That budgeting is difficult. I would be open to using my sabbatical money. **Jane Higgins** We also need to consider that not everyone has a partner. Sometimes budgeting is not possible. I could not do it without my full salary. **Hillary Lowenberg** This year, I decided not to take vision or dental, because it was too costly. **Amy Gygax** I am looking at our school budget the same way, we don't have a big salary as a school, and finding money to come out of that is challenging. I did research on how parental leave is funded. There are three states that offer paid maternity leave, California, Rhode Island, and New Jersey all have it, and it works by everyone in the state has it taken out of their check. People apply for benefits, and they get six weeks. In California, it is 55% of your weekly income, in New Jersey is two

thirds. I don't know Rhode Island. Another state, I think Arkansas, just passed it, and it is funded in the same way that Karen's plan would work. People donate unused paid sick and personal leave days, and it gets put into a fund. I felt that I could support a plan that has that funding already in the budget, and it would build up over time. It can build, and we could do separate fundraisers, but it is challenging to not have it saved up, and to pull from it. **Dara Nikolic** That is a great place to start. I have used up my days before, because they didn't roll over. I think if we all knew that our extra days were going into a shared fund, speaking for myself, I might not use them all up. **Amy Gygax** Sick days can only be used when you are sick, those will not all be used up. **Michelle Coull** With all the people having kids this year, it has brought it to the forefront. Does six weeks feel doable? What we are doing for Hannah, does that feel doable? **Amy Gygax** We had talked about getting the funds together up to a certain amount. We could have nobody need it for several years, and get the fund up to \$15,000- \$20,000, so that if two people need it, but we also would not want to give up all the money as soon as one person needed it. I don't know how much money we would have in that fund, and if we could guarantee it. **Michelle Coull** I don't want to just say let's build it up and hope nobody gets pregnant. I would like to see that the next person that gets pregnant is going to be covered for a certain amount of time, and we will do our best to find the funds and pool our money, and if that's filled it's a great thing whatever it is family leave or an emergency. The need is there right now, and it would give us peace of mind to know we were at four weeks or six weeks. **Dara Nikolic** Also, having it in place that we can take a certain amount of time off unpaid, or come back part time. That came up for Hannah, she wanted to come back parttime next year, and that was in question. **Karen Bailey** That was a misunderstanding **Dara Nikolic** But there was a question, and without having a policy it is unknown. **Amy Gygax** Was that in question? It was my understanding that she was always planning on coming back part time. **Karen Bailey** That was never a question, it was whether Jesse would be her co-teacher. **Jane Higgins** It wasn't clear, and it cause a lot of harm and pain about whether she could come back and do what she wanted. It very unclear to her. Moving forward, that clarity is important **Amy Gygax** I agree. **Dara Nikolic** Part time with your class is different than part time. That was where the question was, if she would be able to come back to her class, or if she would be used somewhere else. **Amy Gygax** It's important to have something in place, but we were not in the conversation that they had, so we cannot say what happened. It was obviously distressing to Hannah, which I think we can agree on. And we want to have something in place, so that isn't happening moving forward. **Jane Higgins** In other schools, you are guaranteed a position in the district, not necessarily the school that you are taking leave from. Here it is different, because we stay with our class, that will require flexibility in our policy. I think it would be hopeful for us, to be able to come back to our class, but maybe not always possible. **Hillary Lowenberg** It is such an awesome opportunity to be able to create

whatever we feel fits our school, because we are so unique. **Amy Gygax** I would like to be able to give everyone a paid year maternity leave. I feel strongly about it, especially working with young children, and seeing the difference of children that can be home with their mothers. I think it is something that is lacking in our country. We really need to have support for new mothers and fathers. I also feel a huge responsibility for the financial health of the school. I do have a question. I am curious why you only want this for full time employees? **Michelle Coull** I think that was just our starting point. **Amy Gygax** I feel like if we have money available it should be available across the board, and if you are a part time employee, you get part time benefits. **Dara Nikolic** Hannah and I had talked about that, and we had proposed that it would be proportional. **Michelle Coull** I had a question about that. Jesse and Dara each got two weeks paid, and Hannah is getting six weeks. Sierra isn't getting anything? **Karen Bailey** That is because she has not been here for a full two years. **Jane Higgins** I feel that it is pretty amazing that we were able to make that happen this year, with three people needing it, and no policy in place. We back tracked on that, but it is unheard of that a school would give that after the fact, and come up with the money to support what we could for those teachers. We had nothing in place, and teachers came to this school knowing we had no policy in place. I feel that is very powerful, and I don't want to devalue that. **Amy Gygax** Thank you for bringing that up, I agree. It is an amazing thing that was not in place when these teachers were hired. Thank you for figuring that out for our Karen. **Dara Nikolic** Thank you for listening to us. I think that some of the faculty would be happy to continue brainstorming, and would be willing to consider other ways we could find the money. **Michelle Coull** As with the discussion about the sabbatical, and seeing where that money would come from, we are open to being part of the process of where the money will get drawn from.

#### IV. Discussion:

- a. **Jane Higgins** I think we should talk about what is being done in other places, and what we have researched. What are other creative ways that schools are dealing with this. Kellee, I am interested in the plan that you have looked at. **Kellee O'Shea** I am still new to the board, and don't know what your vacation policy is, or anything. I am not aware of how we have made money available to the teachers currently going on leave. **Karen Bailey** I over budgeted. I knew that we give ten paid sick and personal days off, and I thought that went for all teachers, not realizing that specialty teachers don't receive that, so there was \$26,000 in our subs fund, and then found out we only need \$15,000. So we had extra. Jesse asked for two weeks, Dara, it was after the fact and we had talked about her needs, and Hannah got the rest. But we were within our budget. **Kellee O'Shea** What is standard in most places is FMLA. Do our teachers not get that? **Amy Gygax** When I looked into FMLA I discovered that is for fifty or more employees, which we

don't have. Then I found that Oregon has its own standard, and I thought, since it was a little murky, that we should just make our own policy in place. Do we want to guarantee more than twelve weeks? I want to guarantee a year. I don't know if we qualify for the Oregon policy, but I think we were going by that. **Kellee O'Shea** What does Oregon guarantee? Is it three months or six? **Amy Gyax** I thought it was twelve weeks. **Kellee O'Shea** I think you can choose to use that as twelve weeks full time or twenty four weeks part time, it's a set amount of hours. It must be consecutive with your leave, but it can be spread out as chosen. **Karen Bailey** I would be comfortable with a year, but I don't think I would be comfortable with two years part time. It would be hard for planning. **Kellee O'Shea** How would that work in the classroom? Grade teacher comes in for main lesson, then a sub the rest of the day? **Karen Bailey** Jesse is going to split it with Hannah, so 8-12, and 12-4. **Leann Tourzan** They can have the choice of the year off, or splitting it, but more than a year would be too much? **Amy Gyax** Oregon says that you can take twelve weeks and then you can split, but if you are doing a whole year guaranteed, you wouldn't want to a year worth of time and spread it into two years. But we can write it however we want it to be. **Kellee O'Shea** In the research I have done, it seems what most people and companies do is, just like health insurance, you pay into short term disability, and it is great, and you might need it for some other reason. **Leann Tourzan** Would that be optional? **Kellee O'Shea** Yes. If you get hurt or take maternity leave, they pay 60% of your salary for six weeks. What is paid into it is much less than the benefit. **Leann Tourzan** The limit is six weeks? **Kellee O'Shea** Yes **Karen Bailey** That can be taken after the baby is born? **Kellee O'Shea** Yes. You can take it before or after. In my son's birth, I took four weeks of short term disability before he was born, I only had two weeks of short term disability after he was born, but then FMLA kicked in, and I could have taken twelve weeks. I couldn't afford it, I didn't actually take off all twelve weeks, but I also had two weeks of vacation time I had saved that year. That is no different than anyone that I interviewed. Short term disability, unfortunately is a common standard procedure for maternity leave, and I am sure that is what they are talking about htat the Siskiyou School. I don't know of any school that offers paid maternity leave. **Karen Bailey** Maybe the school pays into it. **Leann Tourzan** I will clarify that. In a way, if they are paying it, and it's cheaper than what we can offer in other ways, it could be a good option. **Kelee O'Shea** Are only the full-time employees eligible for insurance **Karen Bailey** Yes, thirty hours. We have to pay for their insurance after thirty hours and they have the option to pay into dental and vision. **Amy Gyax** We pay for insurance for teachers, and their families too. **Kelee O'Shea** Does Medford School district pay on a step scale. As far as what Ms. Coull said, how do we compare to Medford Schools? **Karen Bailey** On average, its 70% of what district pays, at our last meeting, directors of the five Waldorf charter

schools compared notes, and it was the same across the board. **Amy Gygax** We do increase every year, our steps are just smaller. **Jane Higgins** Does anyone know what Medford, Central Point, and Ashland does? **Karen Bailey** You accrue your own sick and personal days **Amy Gygax** Are you sure they are still doing that? I know it was something that was hard to keep in the budget. **Karen Bailey** Correct me if I'm wrong, most teachers were okay with accruing their days, but some were not. They wanted to keep them for themselves. **Jane Higgins** It never should have been brought on the table, they are not yours to give or take. **Sarah Trujillo** Were they really under the impression that being accrued in a fund already? **Jane Higgins** It was thought that is was being accrued in an emergency fund, for the last two years, based on what Joe said. Maybe it was there, and it got take or used. I don't know why we had the conversation of "are you okay to give them?" they are not ours to give. In my opinion. There was a conversation, of if someone doesn't contribute sick or personal days into the fund, and they want to use the emergency fund, how would that work? **Karen Bailey** It really should really be public knowledge. **Amy Gygax** Yes, hopefully people would trust that the money would be used for good reason. **Jane Higgins** I just wonder if there is a way to include that in the policy. **Amy Gygax** I wouldn't want to penalize someone for using all their sick days. Most people don't use all their sick days. I guess if you have kids, it can be easier. But of all the faculty, it won't often all be used. **Jane Higgins** That is why we look at the average, and that came to about \$5,000. **Amy Gygax** So, even if people used up all their personal days, there would still be sick days left. **Karen Bailey** I don't know if we can do this down the road, but some companies, and even governments are not destringing between sick and personal days, which I liked, because it is easier to plan for subs. **Amy Gygax** I like the idea, but what happens when you take all your days, and then get sick later. **Karen Bailey** It would come out of your salary. **Amy Gygax** We would have to ensure that if we switched to a system where you could take all your days as personal days, that if you got sick after that, the emergency fund would not be used for that. **Jane Higgins** WE are going to need to set up two different policies, one for family leave, and one for emergency leave. What if you got really sick, and needed it? **Amy Gygax** Yes, you would want it to be available if you got truly sick, but not just for a cold. We will need to really clarify. **Jane Higgins** Also, if it is for a family member. We also need to be inclusive too mothers and fathers. What if we have a gay couple that needs family leave **Amy Gygax** Yes, I have seen it written as parental leave, I don't think we should differentiate between mother and father. **Karen Bailey** I am not sure about having two separate policies for family and emergency, because, those that know they will not have any more children might not be as willing to pay into it. **Jane Higgins** I didn't mean separate policies, separate stipulations. **Sarah Trujillo** Will we need an approval process, for family leave. You would need to submit for

either paternal, family, or emergency leave. **Jane Higgins** It couldn't be board approved, because we don't meet enough. **Amy Gygax** That would be and administrative duty. **Kellee O'Shea** Typically it applies to people in your home, right? **Jane Higgins** We will need to decide that. **Karen Bailey** We will need to research that. **Leann Tourzan** That could be our homework for the next work session. **Kellee O'Shea** We should see what the other Siskiyou, and Woodlands are doing. **Leann Tourzan** I will check, and see what Siskiyou does on Friday. **Karen Bailey** I would like to see how easy it is to access. **Amy Gygax** I would like to see if they have a separate leave policy as well. **Karen Bailey** I will check with Woodland Charter School. **Leann Tourzan** I will see how they are handling it at Siskiyou School. **Karen Bailey** Are there other schools that we patterned our sabbatical policy off? **Amy Gygax** No. **Karen Bailey** That is why this is a double whammy, nobody has a sabbatical policy, and we do, nobody has a paid maternity leave policy. **Jane Higgins** I wouldn't say nobody. **Amy Gygax** There was very few, I called many schools, and I found two or three that had a partial sabbatical policy. **Kellee O'Shea** Private or Charter? **Amy Gygax** I called both. Most places said they just can't afford it. **Kellee O'Shea** I am curious as to how the conversation got to this point where everyone is feeling upset. **Jane Higgins** I wouldn't say that everyone is upset. There are a few that have worked very diligently, and hard for many hours, and feel that it is important. I think others are reasonable, and think it is a great idea, but are not upset. I think it part of putting these policies in place, that as a board, we can learn from. What are we missing, and what can we bring and not having the staff doing these sorts of things, because it kind of wrecked them. It was given to them and they were told if they could figure it out, and find the money so they have put in a lot of work. **Karen Bailey** When they brought it to me I should have just said that we don't have the money. That is what Joe said, and I tried to work with it, and I shouldn't have gone down that path. **Leann Tourzan** I was surprised that the sabbatical came before this, I felt like as far as priorities for the school to function **Karen Bailey** There were really strong feelings about that sabbatical. It is almost a taboo subject and someone has to bring those up. **Leann Tourzan** As a kindergarten teacher, I am not really in that world, and don't think that far ahead **Amy Gygax** It is a conversation that we need to have, but for now, we need to focus on where we are at, I agree we need to look at it, see how it is working, but do that at another time. **Jane Higgins** I think it is difficult, that your priorities get brought, and then the board changes and priorities shift. There was a lot of heartache and soul searching going through that process. And it was approved by the board. I see this happen, where something is slated to happen, and then things shift, it can be destabilizing. I think that a leave policy should have been brought by the board years ago, and this year, the need pushed it forward. **Amy Gygax** I would much rather provide that certainty, and say this is something

that is a financially sustainable thing to do. I don't feel that way about the sabbatical, I didn't feel that way when I voted for it, I didn't think it would be financially sustainable. We put in there "if funds are available", and that creates uncertainty for everybody. **Jane Higgins** It is a similar process of not wanting to say no, but needing to ask if it is really feasible. **Amy Gyax** Having gone through that process over the sabbatical, in hindsight, I don't think we should have approved that. That is why I want to be really clear about this. The sabbatical decision was a difficult one, because people had been promised something, and a hard position to be in to be trying to fulfill that promise, but also, not necessarily feeling like it is not the right thing for the school. It is something that I still struggle with, and we will need to address that sometime soon. **Jane Higgins** That is a conversation that will come up because of this. I know it has already been talked about, because the last two teachers were not offered a sabbatical, so it is a conversation. **Karen Bailey** I just didn't bring it up. They were hired without the promise of a sabbatical, that doesn't mean they wouldn't get it. **Jane Higgins** It has been a question of if it is going to continue. **Amy Gyax** That would be something that would be important for us to have another in depth look at. **Karen Bailey** Definitely, what were the goals of the sabbatical, and are we achieving the goals? **Amy Gyax** It is hard to not weave it into this conversation, but let's try to table it for now, while acknowledging that we need to have a conversation about it. Seems like we can definitely use another work session **Jane Higgins** The other possibility that I had thought of in trying to accrue a fund for a safety net, is that the first year we start with the weeks that we can afford, and work up to the goal of a larger number of weeks. **Kellee O'Shea** We also need to consider if more than one person needs the money at the same time. **Jane Higgins** This is where a chart of different ways we could do it would be useful. **Amy Gyax** That is why we might want to try and keep at least some money in the fund, so that there is some available if something unforeseen comes up. **Kellee O'Shea** We should also consider putting a limit, that one person can only access the fund once a year. **Jane Higgins** Can we come back with research from what Woodland and Siskiyou. **Karen Bailey** I can get info from all the other Waldorf charter schools **Kellee O'Shea** Can we have that in an email beforehand, so that we don't use meeting time. **Jane Higgins** What else is our next session goal? Do we want to look at the funds. **Amy Gyax** We should discuss if we want to look for funds in other places or if we want to use the funding that we have already discussed. **Jane Higgins** Are we saying yes? **Amy Gyax** I don't feel like we have said yes. We will write a leave policy, but what that details are still need to be decided. But we need to have a written policy, that lets people know when they are having a child or family emergency what the policy is, how much time they can take off, if or how much of it is paid for, and what their job guarantees are. And then we can look at what we can do in terms of pay. At our

next work-session we can draft something, and bring for approval to the board. We can set the meeting at our next regular meeting **Jane Higgins** Can we go over the to do list for our next meeting? **Sarah Trujillo** Leann will check on Siskiyou school, and Karen will look at the other Oregon Waldorf schools.

**V. Meeting Adjourned**

**b. Amy Minutes submitted by: Sarah Trujillo**

Minutes approved by: \_\_\_\_\_

Board President