APPROVED

Lowcountry Montessori School

Minutes

Board meeting

monthly board meeting

Date and Time
Thursday August 27, 2026 at 4:30 PM

Location
Lowcountry Montessori School

The mission of Lowcountry Montessori School is to provide an authentic Montessori education building a foundation for lifelong learning.

Directors Present
A. Chavarria, A. Walker (remote), A. Whitaker (remote), A. Wright, G. Alexander, L. Lyles, M. Thompson (remote), O. Hawkins, T. Brosnan (remote)

Directors Absent
None

Guests Present
B.Schaffer, C.Creamer (remote), C.Hunt (remote), G.Bednarsh (remote), L.Bennet, M.Watkins, N.Ormsby, R.Beck, S. Fox, V.Roming

I. Opening Items

A. Call the Meeting to Order

G. Alexander called a meeting of the board of directors of Lowcountry Montessori School to order on Thursday Aug 27, 2026 at 4:33 PM.

B. Determination of Quorum

C. Reading of the Mission Statement

D. Approval of Agenda

A. Wright made a motion to approve agenda as published.
A. Chavarria seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

E. Statement of Compliance with FOIA

II. Consent Agenda

A. Approve minutes prior minutes

A. Wright made a motion to approve the minutes from Board meeting on 07-23-26.
A. Chavarria seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
A. Wright made a motion to approve the minutes from Emergency Board meeting on 08-14-26.
A. Chavarria seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

III. Public Comment

A. Public comment period, limited to 3 minutes per person.

Presented by V. Roming

IV. Committee Reports

A. Finance Report

Presented by J. Strickland
Revenue YTD: 393408
Local Revenue 16905
State EIA 376503
No Federal Revenue as of yet
Expenses YTD: 385001
YTD Instructional 216745--55.09%
Net Revenue YTD: 8407
Unreserved Cash: 377819
Money Market: 291722-will remain as Debt Service Reserve

Days Cash on Hand: 25.82

Up Ahead: FY27 pickups
Federal Grant Applications out there- Tech (CATE) Money-hopeful we will get more of that

M. Thompson can you give the Board a quick heads up about funding
J. Strickland about state funding?
M. Thompson 70mil pool at State Level
J. Strickland there is a pool of about 75 million, State Level Grant-not loan, for Charter and Rural public schools that don't have same access to tax dollars, schools that don't have access to property taxes for capital, Chance has more information. Copper will be stepping up and help write proposals. Specifically for capital expenditures.
M. Watkins started working on operational things to try for, maybe we could collaborate on that.

M. Watkins where did we land for 5 ay count
S. Fox don't have ADM but count 384
M. Thompson no ADM right at where we budgeted maybe 5 over for ADM according to Chance
M. Watkins so 367 ADM, 362.57 budgeted?
M. Thompson he was thinking roughly 375 for ADM

M. Watkins what did per pupil funding end up at?
J. Strickland we have not seen what it will August/ September will be funded at, August still off of 135-day count, 43.07. Still have not heard what September/October, based off 5-day count, will be. District still confident 44.50 across full span of year as far as we have heard.
S. Fox 5-day count ADM 379
J. Strickland District did get an additional allotment of funding for growth

M. Watkins remaining target should be roughly 8.33% remaining- 91.67 to be on budget?
J. Strickland yes if you just do straight line, some of the things we know they will be super high in the beginging
M. Watkins with healthcare rising does that fall to the school or staff?
S. Fox it affects the school, we decided to remain paying the same percentage for the staff that we were, so it will affect both.
M. Watkins have we compensated that in the budget?
M. Thompson number of things still in play, positive and negative, if numbers look quite a bit different, maybe towards December we can look at a budget amendment if needed

M. Watkins under operations and maintenance 254 line 6155-has not changed, want to make sure it is categorized correctly.

J. Strickland coding question- likely a person written in under one line but coded under another, have a note to have a conversation with payroll budget department and school to find and make sure everyone is coded correctly.
R. Beck has talked with them and has found errors
J. Strickland has some schools that do a budgetary amendment based on 5 day count, just to help clean stuff up.

G. Alexander my understanding the 5th day count gives us the ADM, but does not give us a change of Funded
S. Fox 5th day gives us the funding until 45, 45 until 135, 135 until 5th day
J. Strickland 5th day is Sept-Dec, 45 is Jan-Apr, 135 is May-Aug
G. Alexander ADM is Average Daily Membership
S. Fox we typically don't add after 135 day count it doesn't change the amount of funding we get and it does not help the classroom that late in the year adding students, try to keep a little over so if we lose a student that late we do not have to add and throw off the balance off the classroom.
G. Alexander if we are doing ADM doesn't the 135 to 5th day count?
S. Fox yes up to 135, but we try not to, it's mid-March
G. Alexander how many days
S. Fox students have 180-teachers have 193

O. Hawkins thinking about the comment that Matt made about Budget amendment, does it make sense after the 45-day count to revisit the budget with actual numbers?
J. Strickland maybe not rom ground up, but always a good idea to keep an eye on the budget, something the Finance committee should be doing
M. Thompson last year never did a budget amendment even though we probably should have, had no good numbers- the big unknowns- in the past so convoluted, but has been cleaned up and made with real numbers. Let's let the dust settle and see where everything is. Can we make it more accurate, yes and we should. That is the goal and driving thought process right now.
O. Hawkins like in a corporate world we would be looking at the budget at different points and revising as needed. So, this is not like a bible just a point in time.

G. Alexander what are you projecting per pupil
J. Strickland dollar amount across the year is 4450 is what the district told us
G. Alexander what did we budget for?
J. Strickland budget for 4450, came in at 4307, will not remain at 4307
M. Watkins and that was due to the budget not being approved
J. Strickland that's right the State budget
M. Thompson but we will more than likely be reimbursed
J. Strickland yeah in a way, the funding coming in higher in subsequent months is what we expect
M. Thompson that's a trimester amount that 4450?

J. Strickland no that's meant to be across the year. 4,450 per weighted pupil, that's the ADM multiplied across many different factors, mainly the high poverty level helps drive that number.

B. Governance

Board Retreat Scheduled for October 24, 2026 9am-1pm, at Lowcountry Montessori School

C. Vote on Finance Committee minutes6-24-26

M. Thompson made a motion to approve 6-24-26 Finance Committee minutes.
The motion did not carry.

V. Director's Report

A. August Update

A. Chavarria made a motion to approve updated Student Cell Policy.
O. Hawkins seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
Presented by S. Fox-report attached
Think idea of revisiting the budget and adjusting accordingly would be helpful, after everything has settled, we have to find the balance between staffing, classroom sizes, and maintaining a budget that supports the school.

Have had some of the first of the Federal funds that we get, based on how many kids are in the CTE program, they are saying that we are getting more money for that, but have not seen that. It has multiple parts, have done the first part and next will be the budget paperwork.
Title 1 application is still not available.
IDEA still not available.
Title 2 we did get that one for teacher training, was a little over 14k

iReady screenings have to be done, that has been a huge challenge, the district switched over platforms. There is PowerSchool, which everyone can understand, and there is a platform last year was called Clover, this year back in December/January the district switched over to Class Link. Nothing has gone smoothly with Class Link, student emails that are needed, it has just been a huge challenge. The person who we hired switched over from NTSS, she is doing a little of both to be our testing coordinator has been out with the flu. Becky and Nicole have stepped up and have started testing, we had to push it back because the first day didn't work.

G. Alexander insurance going up 16% and we agreed to absorb that cost

S. Fox 17%
S. Fox normal every year that it goes up- when you used insurance it goes up. The person that we have every year does a comparison of different programs, and we came down to the lowest option. One of the things that was discussed during the budget discussion was decreasing the amount that the school pays for staff currently we pay:
if you have been here 5 years or more employee is 80% dependent is 50%
if you have been here under 5 years employee is 75% dependent is 50%
Did talk about adjusting that, but that would have basically created a situation where they would have not felt the very meager raise that they got, so we decided not to do that.
G. Alexander understand, so what is the cost of that?
S. Fox that is the 16k dollar shift
G. Alexander with that 16% for employees, each employee, total of 16k that the school agreed to absorb, would that not be part of the reason for the classroom size. So that they would be able to feel some of that raise that they got?
S. Fox yes, have started looking into PEVA, have to see cost wise would it matter, with increase every year it could be that it would be about the same.
G. Alexander great insurance, and the retirement too. It would cost the school some money
S. Fox we have never done it because it would cost the school too much money
G. Alexander what would a parapro start at
B. Schaffer more than Beaufort or Hampton County, I have looked into it, can't remember the number but it was more
G. Alexander 28/29?
S. Fox for the assistants its 28
G. Alexander so if we had the employees take on that 16k, we could have found the 12k to add on another classroom
S. Fox if we did a budget amendment yes, because we are stuck in a budget number.
G. Alexander more important to have the employees happy
S. Fox yes, and we are trying to look at every aspect of that, but that insurance part was painful

O. Hawkins is Copper the primary lead of sourcing grants, is that happening in the admin?
S. Fox the grants that Copper is talking about are Federal Grants that a lot of schools get, annual grants that we get. There are grants that we might hear about, that the district sends up, that we apply for. We have a person that is a grant writer that gives us a non-profit, that is pretty helpful and does a lot of stuff for us. He has been helpful, haven't secured a huge grant, have gotten some little ones for gardening and things like that. We really need grants for computers and a lot of things.
O. Hawkins this gentleman that you are referring to, he is not actually going out to source?
S. Fox I will say we are looking for this, and he will look for grants for that. When he first stated I had already taken a grant writing class at USC and had identified grants/grantors in the state that have likeminded affiliations with us, like our gardens or the culinary. So,

he did a letter writing campaign with them, there was a couple of people that came to see us, it is a start. There are sites for grants, it is just having the time and energy to get it all done. Just did one for school safety, for the PA System, that was through the district, they give us most of them or the Dept of Ed.

G. Alexander I have a little reserve with that 70mil grant and Copper doing it, what would the fee be, and with them doing it for the entire public charter community he is representing how much would we really get? Would it be better for us to do ourselves? Is there someone we could lobby to at the state level?
M. Thompson the conversation with Chance did not seem like that at all. Normally by year two they would raise their rates, but they know where we are at and they are not. Chance has the connections that we don't have and understands how to apply for this. They made this announcement without any instructions on how to apply for it. He was going to be figuring out how to apply for this money. He gave us a task of making sure every single project that we can submit, quotes any and everything, big and small stuff, computers ready for September 1st. Maybe keep him in the loop with this conversation, but was very optimistic during the conversation at the Finance Committee

B. Maintenance report

Presented by M. Watkins-report attached

Looking at the gym floor, and repairs on fencing for grants, if the PA systems grant does not come through that will be on the list for the money that may be coming down.

Water heater down in new building- not under warranty- have had issues with it before, going back and forth on it not being under warranty. Part $800 without markup and labor, don't technically need it, but it can become nonfunctional if not repaired. There is another valve on it that they are going to try to repair instead of replacing the part.
Walk in freezer was under warranty for the part but not labor, labor was $1000
Had another kitchen equipment go down, but that was under warranty.
Keep in mind that we may start running into that, which was part of my hesitation of reducing the budget.

M. Thompson can we put together a list for that 70mil
M. Watkins has to be new?
M. Thompson definitions very vague for what we can get

District Audit
Safety Plans now required
Mandate every staff member, volunteer, board member have to be SC Abuse and Neglect Central Registry checked. Have already been doing that for the staff for the DSS

process, but have been focusing on the 3- and 4-year-old program, but now need to expand it to the rest of the staff and board. The code that is coming from says the Central Registry, like the sex offender registry, in the email they said SC Abuse and Neglect, which is two different entities. Have sent out for clarification.
L. Lyles background or classes we have to go to?
M. Watkins background checks, but SC Abuse and Neglect is different than the background check. One is for if you have ever had DSS called on you, and then you have your State and Federal Checks.

VI. New Business

A. Fundraising Committee

L. Lyles made a motion to approve the minutes from Fundraising Committee Meeting on 07-30-26.
O. Hawkins seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
Presented by A. Wright
Next Fundraising Committee meeting 9-21-26 at 4:30pm

Made $1611.81 on Spring Fling which is more than the year before.

Upcoming Fundraising dates:
Spring Fling May 15,2027 12-4
Talent Show March 19,2027 at 6pm
Afternoon Tea Jan 23,2027 2pm-3:30pm
Food Truck Nov 5,2026 5:30pm-7:30pm

Trunk or Treat Oct 22,2026 5:30pm-7:30pm

B. Board Members

VII. Executive Session

A. Executive Session

A. Chavarria made a motion to go into executive session to discuss Student and Personal matters.
A. Wright seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
A. Chavarria made a motion to leave executive session.
A. Wright seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

VIII. Other Business

A. Vote on matters from Executive Session, if required

No Vote needed

IX. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

A. Wright made a motion to adjourn meeting.
M. Thompson seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 6:53 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
L. Lyles

Documents used during the meeting

- 2026_08_14_emergency_board_meeting_minutes.pdf
- 2026.07.31 LMS Financial Packet.pdf
- Mobile Device_Cell Phone Policy_Authorization Form (2).pdf
- Mobile Device_Cell Phone Policy_Authorization Form_Draft for Approval.docx.pdf
- Director’s Report to Board August 2026.pdf
- Facilities Report 8_24_26.pdf
- 2026_07_30_fundraising_committee_meeting_minutes.pdf