



PULLMAN **PUBLIC**
COMMUNITY **FREE**
MONTESORI **K-9**

**Pullman Community Montessori
School Leader Evaluation FY21-22 evaluation
Laylah Sullivan**

Prepared By: The Leadership Support and Evaluation Committee
Date: 18 Sep 2022

Purpose of Evaluation

It is the Board's responsibility to hire, manage and support the School Leader of the organization. This annual evaluation serves as an important tool in meeting that responsibility. The main purposes of the evaluation are:

1. To provide the School Leader with the opportunity to reflect on their performance over the past year, and to share those reflections in a structured way with the board
2. To provide explicit feedback from staff and Board to the School Leader on her/his performance, to help her/him recognize both strengths and areas for improvement.

Methodology

The School Leader completed a self-evaluation and provided evidence to support their rating. This information was shared with the full board.

The full board and direct reports were asked to complete an online, anonymous survey through BoardOnTrack's School Leader Evaluation Tool. The Evaluation Tool was customized to be similar to the School Leader Evaluation Tool from the Montessori Playbook, produced by the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector.

It was noted that there was a strong correlation between the survey results from staff, board members and Laylah's own self-evaluation, showing that Laylah's self-assessment shows self-awareness and that Laylah strived to be fair and accurate when considering her strengths and areas for growth.

The results from the Board on Track summary were augmented with feedback received via satisfaction surveys from families and staff.

Executive Summary

The School Leader's performance over the last year has been extraordinary. Her tireless work ethic, and her unsurpassed commitment to Pullman Community Montessori signal strong potential as a school leader. In a first year of operations that involved no shortage of curveballs and moving parts, the School Leader guided the school with resilience, hard work, persistence and diligence.

Most Significant Accomplishments and Strengths Demonstrated this Year

- **Resilience** 2021-2022 was a challenging year for most of us involved in education, and for a new school, the challenges were even larger, as the

school has not yet developed a strong sense of community, traditions and support systems. Laylah shepherded a new school in its first year of operation through all of the challenges of the pandemic – difficulty in building community because of limited opportunities to gather, staffing shortages, transportation issues, quarantining and needing to close the school, supply chain issues, delays in renovation, loss of the Montessori coach mid-year, etc. She showed great resilience and grit.

- **Hiring** At a time when many teachers have been leaving the profession due to fatigue from teaching during the pandemic, Laylah actively recruited a full staff for the second year of operations. Not only did she hire teachers, but also a nurse, a bus driver, a food manager, all difficult to fill positions.
- **Oversight of renovations** During the summer of 2021 and 2022, Laylah successfully oversaw major renovations. As a result, students and staff have beautiful environments, well suited to Montessori practice. Laylah's experience of managing her family construction business has been a real asset in managing the renovation process.

As in any evaluation, there are areas in which the School Leader should focus on improving over the coming year. Two areas seem most critical.

The first is community building. Laylah has commented that due to Covid restrictions, the opportunities for community building were limited during the previous school year, and that this needs to be a high priority for the 2022 – 2023 school year. Without a strong sense of community we are unlikely to meet our enrollment goals for the 2023 – 2024 school year, which needs a 64% increase in students, unless new targets are set. Community building is important to the commitment of staff, students, families, board members and the broader community. Every effort needs to be made to engage our school community in meaningful ways – volunteering, events, opportunities to observe, outreach and publicity . . . This community building effort needs to be a high priority for Laylah to lead. As this must be a priority for the school to succeed, the mid-year check-in this year will focus on the satisfaction and retention of students and staff. It is essential that we retain staff this year. The loss of staff last year led to anxiety among both families and staff, and onboarding new staff at the start of this year is time consuming. We recommend that Laylah makes taking care of her people – staff and families – a very high priority. The key challenge is to continue to build a school and staff culture that is resilient, trusting, and passionate about Montessori. A willingness to discuss the results of the evaluation assuming positive intent in all feedback and to partner with all involved to ensure the mission of PCM is able to be fully realized.

The second area for growth seems to center around delegation, time management and developing/including skills and talents of others. The opening year presented so many challenges (losing key staff member, shortage of subs, Covid challenges for remaining open and running with staff having to quarantine, etc.) that Laylah relied heavily on her own determination to push

through, and didn't have the time to delegate or develop talents and skills in others. With increased staff for the 2022 – 2023 school year, especially staff in the office/admin team, this is a vital goal for this year - delegation, developing trust in others to complete tasks, utilizing skills and talents of others, listening and including the ideas of others. We encourage Laylah to fully utilize the contract with Spokane International Academy during this school year, to free up more of her time to develop the PCM community and team. This will help PCM actively live its mantra of 'We are leaders.'

As far as time management goes, with more office/admin team staff, it would be helpful for Laylah to be working less in the immediate moment and more in planning for the future. This would help staff, families, board members and volunteers e.g. board members having information provided a week ahead to allow for careful consideration, volunteer opportunities requested well ahead of a need, e.g. for overnight camping experience.

As part of time management, and priority building for the future, this seems a pivotal time for Laylah, as Head of School, to revisit the original plan and vision for the school, and use data on enrollment, staffing and from feedback to be proactive in creating a high fidelity sustainable program.

Questions for the Head of School to deeply consider with the board of trustees include:

- Is the growth model for the school realistic and sustainable?
- Are there enough staff and resources for the school to be both a high-fidelity Montessori school and a high-fidelity Place Based school in a small school that is both public and in a rural setting?
- We recommend that these discussions happen during this fall, as the hiring and recruitment window for the 2023-2024 school year opens around November.
 - How many students do we realistically think we will enroll?
 - How many teachers/classrooms will we need?
 - Is this the right time to go further into the adolescent community? Shall we concentrate and strengthen our K-6 program first?
 - Once plans are agreed upon by the PCM Board and Head of School, these plans should be communicated early to the community.

We thank Laylah for all of her hard work and commitment to PCM during the 2021-2022 school year, and send our best wishes for the 2022-2023 school year. We look forward to discussing this Head of School Evaluation in person with Laylah, and supporting her through the coming year.