

**Recommendations of the CMP Governing Board's *ad hoc*  
Committee on Teaching Assistant Recruitment and Retention**

Adopted by the Governing Board on May 9, 2022

In order to better retain CMP's current teaching assistants and recruit high quality applicants to fill open positions, the Governing Board directs the Superintendent to oversee implementation of the following provisions regarding CMP TAs:

- I. Compensation:
  - A. When budgetarily feasible, offer those part-time TAs who are interested two additional paid hours per week on a set day (i.e. every Friday). This keeps the TAs under the threshold for full-time while providing additional pay and one day a week with extra time to spend with their lead teacher or catching up on other work outside of school hours. (Projected cost: \$175,000 annually)
  - B. When budgetarily feasible, provide part-time TAs with paid holidays. There are eight holidays in the school year – Labor Day, Veterans Day, New Year's Day, MLK Day, President's Day, and three days for Thanksgiving. (Projected cost: \$106,000 annually)
  - C. Consider increasing the number of full-time TAs. Offer TAs who have been with CMP for 5+ years full-time hours (.75-1.0) and benefits, if they are interested. (Note that not all will want the additional hours.) These additional full-time TAs can help with the TA mentoring program detailed in Section V below.
  - D. Review the TA compensation scale with an eye toward including a longevity stipend after years 2 and 5, as well as an increase in pay that is not limited to \$0.25 annually.
  - E. Review the contracted hours policy. Have administrative personnel review the hourly policy with TAs and insist that TAs only work their contracted hours. To the extent TAs work past those hours, fully compensate for that time, of course, but look for signs of overwork and/or potential inefficiencies and address them.
  - F. Compensate for training. Make it clear that hours spent on mandated training are compensable and ensure the mechanism for how TAs can be promptly reimbursed for any out-of-pocket expenses incurred for such training is straightforward and accessible.

II. Addressing Students' Behavioral Issues:

- A. Provide additional strategic training for TAs. Prioritize identifying useful de-escalation and communication workshops and materials and then providing that training to TAs. This might be a combination of in-person and online trainings/materials. Record in-person trainings so that they may be posted online for those staff unable to attend.
- B. Increase the Crisis Prevention Intervention stipend and offer training to additional TAs and other staff. Offer CPI training to additional TAs and staff who express interest and incentivize the program by increasing the CPI stipend multi-fold.
- C. Offer Montessori, positive discipline, and behavioral support workshops for parents, caregivers, and families. CMP can offer monthly or quarterly trainings in the evenings or weekends, like many of our authorizing districts do. This can be done network-wide through Zoom or in a campus-specific setting, all depending on perceived need. Look to partner with our authorizing districts when possible, i.e. with San Juan Unified's Family and Community Engagement team (<https://www.sanjuan.edu/Page/52553>).
- D. Follow the Safety Plan. CMP has a comprehensive Safety Plan that is approved annually by the Governing Board. Administration and staff across campuses should be instructed to dutifully follow the provisions for consequences thoughtfully laid out in the Plan. These provisions should be highlighted for staff and families so everyone understands the reasoning behind and need for consistent responses to harmful behaviors. To the extent there is a separate safety plan for students with IEPs/504 plans, make abundantly clear to teachers, staff, and families what those protocols are and be consistent in implementation.
- E. Ensure TAs have access to IEP and 504 findings. TAs – GenEd and SPED alike need to be aware of and have access to the IEPs and 504 plans for children with whom they work, so that they can understand and implement the strategies and protocols being recommended for that student.

III. Managing Issues of Lack of Time Generally and with Lead Teacher/Case Manager Specifically:

- A. Offer those part-time TAs who are interested two additional hours per week on a set day (i.e. every Friday). As detailed in Section I, this keeps the TAs under the threshold for full-time while providing additional pay and one day a week with extra time to spend with their lead teacher/case manager or catching up on other work outside of school hours.

- B. Create consistent, manageable expectations. Task Human Resources, in conjunction with campus administrators, with creating a clear “job description and expectations” document that individual teachers can modify as necessary and provide to their respective TAs (with a copy back to admin). This way, everyone understands what is being asked of each TA and there are levels of assurance that what is being asked is reasonable given the paid work time provided.
- C. Prioritize and celebrate TA/teacher collaboration. The collaborative relationship between TAs and their lead teacher/case manager should be prioritized and celebrated. Individual campuses might consider highlighting a teacher/TA team in the school newsletter, for example. Half days should not just be for staffing Club M and outside training; TAs should be encouraged to use that time to work with their lead teacher/case manager.
- D. Recruit volunteers to help before/during school. To the extent helpful at any given campus, recruit volunteers to help staff morning drop off (and/or lunchtime and recess) so that TAs can spend that time in the classroom preparing for the day.
- E. Look into hiring PE TAs. Explore hiring a PE TA on campuses where TAs accompany students to PE class. This would free the PE period for these TAs to engage with their lead teacher and complete other tasks. PE majors receiving college credit would be a plus.

#### IV. Career Advancement:

- A. Bring back TA Montessori credentialed program scholarships. CMP formerly offered a limited number of scholarships to TAs to pursue their Montessori credential through Montessori Training Center. (The cost of one scholarship is approximately \$5,000.) Bring back these scholarships utilizing an application process, with the number of scholarships available based on annual budgetary considerations.
- B. Post advancement/job opportunities on the CMP staff webpage. Have a career track document and links to relevant resources readily available in a section on “Career Advancement and Job Opportunities” on the CMP staff webpage. Include non-teacher-track advancement opportunities, as well. Send periodic emails reminding TAs of job and education/training opportunities.
- C. Clearly identify the TA-to-Lead Teacher track, as well as other career opportunities. Task Human Resources with creating a document (or series of documents) that clearly identifies the track to go from TA to full teacher, including resources available. Create an additional document for other career

opportunities available to TAs, like Club M Coordinator, Reading/Math Specialist, Administrative Assistant, Office Manager, etc. Highlight the availability of scholarships.

- D. Increase interaction between Human Resources staff and TAs. Encourage Human Resources to periodically table at each campus for a day to get feedback from TAs (as well as teachers and staff) and provide information/answer questions regarding career and education opportunities.

V. Training:

- A. If financially feasible, add an additional one-to-two day training period for TAs in the summer. Look into longer paid training prior to the start of the school year – one or two additional days added on to the current training period for TAs to get robust Montessori/SPED/other training, as well as training on how to manage students, safety protocols and behavioral issues, and the daily structure of a classroom.
- B. Bring back Super Duper Saturdays. The Super Duper Saturday program has traditionally consisted of nine half-day TA training sessions held one Saturday a month in the Gibbons Room at the Carmichael campus, covering running a classroom, working with students, the Montessori Method, and more. The curriculum is already largely designed. Record the sessions and make them (along with the binder of materials) available online for TAs. That way, the training could be offered digitally in years when the budget or other circumstances do not allow for in-person training. (Projected cost: approximately \$35,000 a year for 30-40 TAs.)
- C. Provide SPED training specific to diagnosis/behaviors. Develop a specific SPED TA training that includes directed training for additional classroom support aids based on diagnosis/behaviors of the assigned student.
- D. Develop an online database of Montessori lessons. Create an online database of quality Montessori lessons (including ones taped by our own teachers during distance learning, if applicable) and have it readily accessible to TAs through the staff portal on the CMP website.
- E. Prioritize time with lead teacher/case manager for specific guidance and training.
- F. Encourage TAs to take the Montessori Training Center's assistants' training course. Have CMP continue to pay the course fee for each TA who participates. (\$330-\$355 per person.)
- G. Create a training program for TAs who start after the first day of school. Have a

set training program (recorded, if need be) for those TAs who start work after the school year begins. Possibly include a Montessori overview and recorded presentations with power points – ideally classified by grade grouping so the lessons are relevant – from in-person training done prior to the start of the school year. Mandate and compensate this training for late-hire TAs.

- H. Build upon TA mentoring programs. Use informal and formal evaluation processes (detailed in Section VII below) to identify skill sets and pair TAs appropriately. Allow time for TAs to mentor one another in the classroom.

## VI. TA Meetings:

- A. Hold TA meetings regularly. Identify TA meeting policy across campuses (in terms of regularity – once a month, quarterly, etc. – and, general composition) and create some consistency.
- B. Solicit input & feedback. Solicit input and feedback from TAs about what topics would be helpful to cover, if not already doing so.
- C. Consider meetings by grade grouping. Have TA meetings by grade grouping when possible and/or warranted.
- D. Have TAs run some meetings. Have experienced TAs run some trainings/meetings; they know what other TAs are going through. Compensate for whatever additional time they need to prepare. (This would be a good fit in the future for those seasoned TAs who opt to work full-time.)
- E. SPED TA meetings. Include SPED TAs in GenEd TA meetings when possible. Also encourage SPED to hold their own TA meetings, if not already occurring.
- F. Don't forget about lead teachers/case managers. While TA meetings are helpful, they should not take up every half-day. Time spent learning from and with the lead teacher/case manager in the classroom setting is incredibly valuable.

## VII. Job Expectations and Feedback:

- A. Create Consistent, manageable expectations. As detailed in Section III (A) above.
- B. Have an annual performance review. To the extent it is not already happening on any given campus, utilize the TA Performance Development Plan (PDP) to conduct an annual performance review of all TAs, wherein feedback is both solicited and provided. Include in the PDP a section evaluating successes and challenges with the lead teacher/case manager. Utilize the review to make necessary adjustments.

VIII. General Job Satisfaction:

- A. Prioritize time with lead teacher/case manager. Create more time for lead teachers and TAs to spend in the classroom together without students present.
- B. Guide teachers on how to utilize their TAs. Provide training and resources to teachers on how to utilize their TAs effectively. This is a learned skill that can be supported.
- C. Social events outside the school day. Encourage Campus Advisory Councils (CACs) to allocate funds for fun teacher/TA/staff social events outside of the school day to bolster camaraderie and deepen relationships, ideally several times a year.
- D. Make outside facilities more comfortable. Things that make CMP's outside spaces more pleasant for our students — like shade structures and comfortable places to sit – in turn makes things more pleasant for the TAs who are outside with them. Encourage principals and individual CACs to prioritize funding such improvements.
- E. Encourage parent volunteers. When a pandemic isn't raging, encourage parents to volunteer at car line, recess, lunchtime, and PE to give TAs a bit of a break from running around.
- F. Consider updating campus TA dress codes. Encourage principals to rethink (or reconfigure) any applicable no jeans/no leggings rule. Comfortable clothing can help with morale.
- G. Annual Performance Review. Utilize the annual performance review as a space where TAs can provide and receive feedback.
- H. Check back in with TAs after hiring. Task HR with doing a 30 or 60 day check-in post-hire to see how TAs are acclimating and what additional support they might need. Augment this with HR periodically tabling at each campus to get feedback from TAs (as well as teachers and staff) and provide information/answer questions.
- I. Conduct an annual "State of the School" survey. Conduct an anonymous "state of the school" survey every year or two to get feedback from stakeholders – TAs, teachers, staff, parents, students – about what's working and what could be improved upon, and use those results to implement changes.
- J. Publicly celebrate our TAs. One suggestion is a TA profile on parent square once in a while. Another possibility is a piece in the campus newsletter celebrating the

strengths of a particular TA/teacher pairing. Whatever the approach, the goal is to make our TAs feel appreciated as critical members of the CMP team.

- K. Revamp the Exit Interview Process. Update the Exit Interview process to solicit more feedback. Have principals/HR encourage departing TAs to participate in the exit interview process, either in-person or by completing the form. Make it clear the information will be used to help improve CMP. Have HR annually compile the data in a way that protects individual TAs' anonymity and present findings of note to the Board/Superintendent/Principals.

IX. Recruitment:

- A. Diversity matters. Be mindful of diversity and representation in recruitment and hiring practices.
- B. Recruit current and graduating college students to come work at CMP. Actively recruit at area community colleges, as well as Sac State and UC Davis, highlighting our Montessori curriculum, materials, and values.
- C. Recruit retirees. Recruit retirees through flyers and other outreach at places seniors may be more likely to congregate, like area senior centers and libraries, as well as community newspapers.
- D. Explore having high school interns. Several area high schools mandate their students do an internship, some for multiple full days a week. Look into bringing on a few exemplary students to assist in the front office, PE class, or wherever may be helpful.
- E. Utilize social media. Continue to recruit on local social media group pages and to encourage parents to help in this effort.

To ensure the Governing Board and community stakeholders stay abreast of progress made toward implementation of the foregoing, the Superintendent shall provide to the Board at least every six months, as part of the Superintendent's Report or otherwise, an update detailing the latest steps taken.