



Board Governance Handbook

This handbook reflects the governance team's work on the development of a framework for effective governance. The intent of this document is to put into place norms, procedures and protocols that will enable the governance team to perform its responsibilities in an effective manner while maintaining the focus on students and learning. This is a living document that will be reviewed by the governance team on an annual basis to ensure that it is an effective tool.

Adopted: December 11, 2023

Commented [CK1]: Suggested: Review in one year after adoption and every three years after that.

Board Governance Team

Board of Directors 2023-2024 Term

- Julia Sweeney, Business Representative 1 & Board Chair
- Mickey Slamkowski, Montessori Representative & Vice-Chair
- Bob Lewis, Business Representative 2
- Laura Kerr, Charter Representative
- Scott Richards, Community Representative
- Renee Dall, San Juan Parent Representative
- Jenna Westbrook-Kline, Capitol Parent Representative
- Aaron Walker, Elk Grove Parent Representative
- Ann Curtis, Shingle Springs Parent Representative

Superintendent / Executive Director

- Brett Barley

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Vision

The Vision of the California Montessori Project is to provide a Montessori education that supports the intellectual, social, and emotional development of every child.

This will be achieved by:

- Promoting independence
- Teaching respect for oneself and others
- Building confidence
- Creating a sense of social responsibility, and
- Empowering every student to be a global citizen.

Mission

The Mission of the California Montessori Project is to offer a quality, tuition-free Montessori Education that challenges our students to reach their full potential.

Core Values

The Core Values of the California Montessori Project are to offer a transitional k~~k~~indergarten through Middle-middle School-school program which has the environment, materials, curriculum, resources and support to enable students to become educated to high academic standards and to develop themselves to their full potential as competent, happy, productive individuals who contribute to a better society and a peaceful world.

The California Montessori Project provides a Montessori curriculum, integrated with the California Common Core State Standards, for students ranging from transitional k~~k~~indergarten through eighth grade. ***The California Montessori Project is committed to serving the best interest of the student.*** Parental participation is encouraged and highly valued in terms of the contribution it makes to the child's education and the school community.

High academic standards and expectations of achievement, with emphasis on core subjects, are maintained through adherence to these values:

- Education of the whole child
- Creative, passionate, progressive teachers (California State Credentialed and Montessori-certified) who are committed to Montessori philosophy
- Responsibility, accountability, and freedom for individual student progress within the academic framework
- Development of critical reasoning skills, the encouragement of creativity, and service learning
- High, unwavering standards of conduct, emphasizing respect for self and others, honesty, responsibility, and courtesy
- Collaboration, peer accountability and goal-setting according to developmental readiness
- Parent involvement in their child's education and collaboration through governance, parent, and campus meetings

- Low student/teacher ratios
- Incorporating technological trends
- Common Core State Standards aligned with Montessori curriculum

Fundamental Values

- Comprehensive academic/social skills development using Montessori-based curriculum
- High academic standards and expectations, with emphasis on core subjects
- Quality Montessori learning materials for all students
- Participation in state-authorized Teacher-Training Program
- Responsibility, accountability, and freedom for individual student progress
- School-wide technology-based foreign language program

Fundamental Values

Internationally high academic standards and expectations of achievement, with emphasis on core subjects, are maintained through adherence to these values:

- Small total school populations and low student/teacher ratios
- Creative, passionate, progressive teachers who are committed to Montessori philosophy
- Responsibility, accountability, and freedom for individual student progress within the academic framework
- Challenges to develop critical reasoning, openness to encourage creativity, and opportunities to facilitate service
- High, unwavering standards of conduct, emphasizing respect for self and others, honesty, responsibility, and courtesy
- Emphasis on collaboration, peer governance, problem-solving, and goal-setting according to developmental readiness
- High parental involvement and collaboration in education and governance

Core Beliefs

Dr. Maria Montessori’s fundamental goal was to prepare the child for the “real world” and to recognize each student as an individual with unique personal, social, emotional, and educational needs. As we acknowledge the individual nature of each student and staff member, consistency is achieved when social, academic, and professional decisions are addressed through a set of values and principles identified by CMP.

The following list of core beliefs outlines the professional attitudes and actions of CMP staff members:

- Our actions and words should always maintain the dignity and respect of both child and adult
- Adults will model appropriate and respectful behavior for students
- Students are allowed opportunities to be accountable for their decisions, as these provide valuable learning experiences and preparation for the real world
- Emphasis will be focused on maintaining safety, helping to nurture the campus climate and culture, and to establish boundaries for behavior
- School problems will be handled by school personnel. Criminal activity will be referred to the proper authorities.

Strategic Plan Goals

Environment Goals:

1. All students will have access to a high quality, 21st Century Montessori education that is California state standards aligned.
2. All students and staff will have access to a safe, fully functioning, adequate space for learning and working.
3. All students will have access to enrichment programs, during the school day and outside of traditional school hours (i.e. sports, academics, visual and performing arts, and STEM).

Student Goals:

1. CMP will see an annual increase in student climate and culture satisfaction.
2. CMP will see an annual improvement in Math performance on CMP and state assessments.
3. CMP will see an annual improvement in English Language Arts performance on CMP and state assessments.
4. CMP will increase and improve services to unduplicated pupils: English Language Learners, Low-Income Students, Foster Youth and Homeless Youth.

Teacher Goals:

1. 100% of CMP Teachers will be considered “Highly Qualified” by state and federal standards (within 3 years of employment at CMP) and 50% of CMP Teachers will be considered a “*Montessori Mentor*” by CMP standards.
2. 80% of CMP Teachers will be rated effective in combining Montessori and California standards aligned curriculum.
3. All CMP staff will receive concentrated and targeted Professional Development.

Operational Goals:

1. 95% of CMP staff will report a high level of job satisfaction and CMP will see an increased staff retention rate.
2. 95% of CMP Special Education staff will be CMP Employees.
3. CMP will create an operating reserve that includes 60 days cash on hand.
4. CMP’s Central Office and Site Administration Teams will work to build stronger systems and processes across the network.

Effective Governance

There are three dimensions to the effective governance of any organization: the actions of an individual, a group coming together to govern, and the performance of governance responsibilities by the group.

~~In At the California Montessori Project, a charter management organization,~~ the Board and Superintendent work together as a governance team. For a governance team to work together effectively, members need to:

- Maintain a ~~Unity~~ unity of ~~Purpose~~ purpose;
- Agree on and govern within appropriate roles;
- Create and sustain a positive governance culture; and
- Create a supportive structure for effective governance.

Effective governance tenets encompass the basic characteristics and behaviors that enable governance team members to effectively create a climate for excellence in a school organization and maintain the focus on improved student learning and achievement.

Governing Board Norms

1. Consider the welfare and safety of all students.
2. Establish priorities and remain focused, keeping our mission and vision at the forefront.
3. Assume best intentions and commit to developing understanding and trust.
4. Respect all people and ideas and keep lines of communication open and flowing.
5. Make decisions professionally and support policies or decisions once established.
6. When speaking with the public, speak only for yourself, not for CMP or the Board.
7. Refer all relevant complaints to the Dispute Resolution Policy and address incidents of concern to the school Principal, Superintendent, or Board Chair.
8. Before voting, check all information with the appropriate source to establish accurate facts.
9. Come prepared to all meetings by reading the documentation beforehand and informing the Governing Board Secretary if you will not be able to attend a meeting. It is expected that Board Members attend every meeting.
10. Exhibit and promote Montessori core values and principles, and be an advocate for school programs and philosophies.

Governance Team Practices

As a Governance Team, we commit to . . .

Placing Something on the Agenda

- Board members may request that an issue be placed on a board agenda for discussion without extensive staff work (defined as more than fifteen minutes)-staff work. After the discussion, the Board may direct the Superintendent to prepare materials for a deeper board discussion and/or to take action at a future board meeting.
- Superintendent will endeavor to provide at least 10 days one week's notice of a topic being agendaized for discussion.
- The Superintendent will work with the Board Chair to ensure that the Board has an opportunity to discuss significant issues before they appear as an action item.

Board Meeting Agendas

- When a significant or high-profile item is brought to the Board for action, the Superintendent shall present a summary of the perspectives and issues considered in arriving at the recommendation.
- When an item with revisions is brought to the Board for action, the Superintendent shall inform the Board of the revisions.
- The Board will receive the final agenda on the Thursday before a board meeting.
- Board members will endeavor to submit their board packet questions to the Superintendent by 8:00 am on Monday mornings. Questions may be communicated via email or voice mail.

Use of Study Sessions

- Study sessions will be developed throughout the year to ensure coverage of both timely and urgent issues which require extensive discussion before a possible Board action is taken.
- Study sessions will be organized with a brief staff presentation followed by Board discussion. Presentation materials will be provided to the Board with the meeting materials three days prior to the study session.

Handling complaints from the community

- The Board and Superintendent are committed to having parent/staff complaints handled as close to the source as possible.
- Board members will refer complainants back to the appropriate teacher or principal and also notify the Superintendent. If the complainant has already been to those levels, the Board member will refer the complaint to the Superintendent.
- A board member forwarding a complaint will not be perceived to be endorsing the complaint.
- The Superintendent (or designee) will respond in a timely way to the complainant, investigate the complaint, and communicate back to the complainant and the board member in order to close the loop.

Commented [CK2]: Note, one group wanted to delete this section. A proofer thinks it is a good idea to keep this section.

Individual Members' Request for Information

- In order to ensure that all Board members receive the same information and to keep the Superintendent informed of Board member's questions and concerns, requests for information shall come to the Superintendent's Office. The Board member will receive the information, and it will be included in periodic updates, allowing for other board members to comment or escalation to an agenda item.

Surprises

- The Superintendent and Board members commit to sharing information with each other in order to avoid surprises to any member of the governance team.
- The Superintendent can be reached by email and cell phone.

Maintaining Confidentiality

- The Board, Superintendent, and any attendees ~~Cabinet members~~ agree to maintain the confidentiality of all closed sessions and privileged communication as required by Education Code. Such matters relating to personnel issues, litigation, real property negotiations, and labor negotiations.
- The periodic updates are not confidential; however, the intended audience is the board and ~~Everything that is confidential will be clearly marked as such – whether by fax, email or mail. they should not be shared with others without a Request for Public Information made through the Superintendent's Office. Everything that is confidential will be clearly marked as such – whether by fax, email or mail.~~

Board Member Role in Public

- School and community invitations for board members to attend events will be coordinated through the Superintendent's Office. The Superintendent's Office staff will provide details for board members regarding costs and expectations for attendance.
- Board members will be introduced at all school and district events unless they are attending only as a parent or spectator. When in doubt, the administrator in charge will ask the board member whether they wish to be introduced.
- Board members will make the administrator in charge of an event aware of their attendance when they arrive.

Clearly Communicate and Establish Priorities

- The Board and Superintendent will establish annual priorities that will be used to evaluate the Superintendent and measure the ~~District's~~ CMP's progress toward its goals.

School Visits

- Board members will work with the Superintendent to coordinate school visits to observe firsthand the instructional program and school operations.

Handling the Media

- All board members will refer contacts by the media to the Superintendent.

- The Superintendent shall contact all board members to inform them of the content of the communication.

Governance Team Protocols

Purpose

The Governing Board of Directors is the educational policy making body for California Montessori Project ~~the charter management organization~~. To effectively meet ~~the organization's CMP's~~ challenges, the Board and the Superintendent must function together as a governance team. To ensure unity among team members, effective operating procedures or protocols must be in place. There are general protocols and those that are specific for the Board and the Superintendent.

General – The Board and Superintendent will:

1. Keep learning and achievement for all students as the primary focus.
2. Understand, uphold, and model Montessori principles and values.
- ~~2-3.~~ Value, and support, ~~and advocate for public charter schools,~~ and public education, and Montessori education.
- ~~3-4.~~ Operate openly with trust, integrity, ~~and transparency,~~ grace, and courtesy.
- ~~4-5.~~ Govern in a dignified and professional manner, treating everyone with civility, ~~dignity,~~ and respect while honoring the right to disagree with each other.
- ~~5-6.~~ Govern within Board adopted policies and procedures.
- ~~6-7.~~ Define and respect the difference between administration and policy-making and respect the roles of each.
- ~~7-8.~~ Keep confidential matters confidential. Uphold the legal requirement for confidentiality on all matters arising from Board Meeting ~~Executive-Closed~~ Sessions; keep all conversations taking place in Closed Session absolutely confidential.
9. Keep communication open and courteous; agree that email and text messages should not be used to address personnel matters nor resolve governance team issues.
- ~~8-10.~~ Uphold Montessori

Board Members will:

1. Attend Board Meetings.
- ~~1-2.~~ Work with all members of the Board and the Superintendent to become a team devoted to students; be dedicated to making all members of the team successful.
- ~~2-3.~~ Act with dignity, and understand the implications of demeanor and behavior.
- ~~3-4.~~ Recognize and respect differences of perspective and style on the Board and among staff, students, parents, and the community.
- ~~4-5.~~ Focus on policy making, planning and evaluation for student success.
- ~~5-6.~~ Communicate a common vision.
- ~~6-7.~~ Understand authority rests with the Board as a whole and not with individuals.
- ~~7-8.~~ Support decisions of the majority after honoring the right of individual members to express opposing viewpoints and vote their convictions.
- ~~8-9.~~ Understand the distinctions between Board and staff roles, and refrain from performing management functions that are the responsibility of the Superintendent and staff.
- ~~9-10.~~ Acknowledge individual requests for reports and projects will be directed only to the Superintendent.

- ~~10~~.11. Participate in establishing annual expectations and goals for the Superintendent.
- ~~11~~.12. Objectively evaluate the Superintendent's performance and provide appropriate feedback.
- ~~12~~.13. Periodically evaluate its own effectiveness; review its protocols and practices.
- ~~13~~.14. Take collective responsibility for the Board's performance.
- ~~14~~.15. Communicate directly with the Superintendent whenever a question or concern is raised by a staff member, student, parent or community member.
- ~~15~~.16. Contact the Superintendent, and Board Chair, whenever contacted by the media regarding an incident, event, or agenda item.
- ~~16~~.17. Communicate directly with the Superintendent prior to Board meetings to address questions and/or concerns about agenda items; honor the "no surprises" rule.
- ~~17~~.18. Communicate one-on-one with the Superintendent when an individual concern arises; do not allow a matter to fester.
- ~~18~~.19. Cast a vote on all matters except when a conflict of interest arises.
- ~~19~~.20. Listen to and recognize individual constituents and special interest groups while understanding the importance of using one's best judgment to represent all members of the community.
- ~~20~~.21. Visit school sites and attend school functions, as time permits, but avoid interrupting instruction or interrupting employees at work.
- ~~21~~. Support with outreach and fundraising. Represent the organization, when possible, by attending community functions.
- ~~22~~. Participate in professional development and commit the time and energy necessary to be an informed and effective leader.

The Superintendent will:

1. Work toward creating a team with the Board dedicated to students.
2. Work with the Board to establish a clear vision and mission, core values and strategic goals for the organization.
3. Communicate the common vision and mission, core values and strategic goals.
4. Recognize that the Board/Superintendent governance relationship requires support from ~~the organization's~~ CMP's management team.
5. Understand the distinction among Board, Superintendent and staff roles, and respect the role of the Board as the representative of the ~~RAFOS~~ CMP community and as the maker of policy.
6. Accept leadership responsibility and be accountable for implementing the vision, mission, goals, and policies of the organization.
7. Prepare preliminary goals annually for the Board's consideration.
8. Provide data to the Board members so data-driven decisions can be made.
9. Make personnel recommendations and changes in consultation with the Board as appropriate.
10. Communicate with Board members promptly and effectively.
11. Inform the Board prior to critical information becoming public; apprise all Board members in a timely manner of any major incident or when they may be called on to answer or explain.
12. Distribute information fully and equally to all Board members.

13. Provide information requested by one Board member to every Board member as appropriate.
14. Distribute the Board agenda in a timely fashion and with enough time for Board study, and clarify information prior to scheduled meetings.
15. Never bring a matter to a public meeting that is a surprise to a Board member or cabinet member.
16. Provide requests for additional information through a Board update, special report, Board agenda items, or as a Board workshop.
17. Present major decisions initially as a discussion item, then place it on the next Board agenda for action.
18. Treat all Board members professionally.
19. Communicate with individual Board members to determine if concerns exist prior to a possible problem developing, and respect the right to disagree with each other.
20. Keep the Board informed regarding significant issues and/or serious situations to honor the “no surprises” rule.
21. Bring to the attention of the Board matters that affect relationships.
22. Visit school campuses regularly.
23. Represent the organization by being visible in the community.
24. Model the value of lifelong learning.
25. Will endeavor to notify Board members when the media or noteworthy visitors are on campus.

Appendix A: California Montessori Project Governing Board Bylaws