

SOUTHERN MONTESSORI SCHOOL



*Education In Harmony With Life*

**BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
HANDBOOK**

# **1. THE ROLE OF THE BOARD**

## **The Board is responsible for:**

- 1.1** the governance of the Centre, in accordance with the Associations Incorporation act, 1985 and its regulations
- 1.2** promoting the aims and objectives of the Centre
- 1.3** appointing the Principal
- 1.4** reflecting the Centre's broad educational policy, namely, the provision of a Montessori education for the children of the Centre
- 1.5** providing the maximum physical and human resources available to achieve the aims and objectives of the Centre
- 1.6** properly maintaining and developing the buildings and grounds
- 1.7** ensuring that effective written policies and practices relating to health and safety issues are in place and that these are known generally, monitored, revised and maintained
- 1.8** controlling the finance and property and in its role as owner or owner's representative, the Board must address:
  - CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT
  - PURCHASE OF LAND
  - RENTAL AGREEMENTS
  - FINANCING, BUDGETS AND BUILDING INSURANCE
  - DIRECTORS INSURANCE

## **1:2 GENERAL DUTIES AND EXPECTATION OF BOARD MEMBERS**

### **Board Members will be expected to:**

- 1:2.1 demonstrate a commitment to, and understanding of the aims, objectives, policies and programs of the Centre and at all times be a positive influence and role model within the school community
- 1:2.2 understand that as a Board member they are there to represent the needs of the whole school and not there to pursue personal agendas
- 1:2.3 maintain confidentiality about Board business
- 1:2.4 maintain an awareness of the Centre's financial position
- 1:2.5 participate on Board committees or work groups
- 1:2.6 attend Centre functions where possible
- 1:2.7 assist and participate in fundraising
- 1:2.8 be an informed contributor in Board decisions and activities
- 1:2.9 be regular and punctual to all Board meetings, giving notice to the Secretary, if unable to attend
- 1:2.10 be familiar with the Board responsibilities, understand the Constitution, and read relevant minutes and reports prior to meetings
- 1:2.11 notify the Secretary of items to be placed on the agenda at least 1 week prior to the meeting
- 1:2.12 represent the Centre in the community
- 1:2.13 be aware of, and prepared to attend meetings of other relevant bodies.

## **1:3 CONDUCT OF A BOARD MEMBER**

### **Board members shall become familiar with, and comply with the following guidelines:**

- 1:3.1 Board members shall conduct themselves at all times in a manner that maintains the good reputation of the Centre and its ability to serve its members (children, parents and staff)
- 1:3.2 members shall familiarise themselves with their duties of office, as stated in the Associations Incorporation Act, 1985 and at all times act honestly and with reasonable diligence in the discharge of these duties
- 1:3.3 issues concerning the day-to-day running of the Centre are only to be discussed with the appropriate staff
- 1:3.4 any member approached by parents or staff with a grievance shall follow the Positive Grievance Resolution Policy.
- 1:3.5 All members, upon accepting a position on the Board of Governors will be required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement as part of their induction.

## **2. THE ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT**

### **The President of the Board has the following duties and responsibilities:**

- 2.1** functions as one of the Office Bearers of the Board
- 2.2** chairs meetings of the Board, and other general meetings of the Centre as appropriate. (see The Role of the Chairperson)
- 2.3** prepares the meeting agendas in consultation with the Secretary and Principal
- 2.4** after the Annual General Meeting, and in consultation with the Principal, ensures that the new Board receives due induction into the role and expectations of the Board and that the roles and responsibilities of elected Board Members are understood
- 2.5** ensures that all members understand their duties and obligations under the Associations Incorporation Act, 1985 and sees that all associated legal requirements are satisfied and appropriate notification is sent, regarding change of Public Officer, after the Annual General Meeting
- 2.6** acts as a spokesperson for the Centre if and when required
- 2.7** is actively involved in the committees of the Board, and with the Principal, is ex-officio on all committees attending meetings whenever possible
- 2.8** attends all meetings of other relevant bodies where possible
- 2.9** writes the President's Report for the Annual Report and presents it at the Annual General Meeting
- 2.10** writes a President's article for the school newsletter and bulletin as required
- 2.11** attends functions as the Centre's representative, on a campus, school, and community level
- 2.12** works towards establishing a close relationship of respect and trust with the Principal
- 2.13** in accordance with the Positive Grievance Resolution Policy, helps resolve issues when necessary
- 2.14** is involved in all aspects of the operation of the Centre's bank accounts
- 2.15** is a co-signatory of cheques
- 2.16** affixes the Seal according to the Constitution
- 2.17** speaks to groups about Montessori as and where appropriate and commensurate with knowledge of Montessori principles and philosophy.

### **3. ROLE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT**

**The Vice President of the Board has the following duties and responsibilities:**

- 3.1** functions as one of the Office Bearers of the Board
- 3.2** acts in the absence or disability of the President
- 3.3** attends all Board meetings and general meetings of the Centre
- 3.4** convenes the Nominations Committee as necessary
- 3.5** assists in the collection and dissemination of information on nominees prior to the Annual General Meeting
- 3.6** ensures all prospective Board members have access to the Board Members' Handbook
- 3.7** assists in the in-service program for new members of the Board
- 3.8** attends functions as a Centre's representative on a campus, Centre and community level
- 3.9** has an in-depth working knowledge of the Centre's Constitution, and is able to give guidance on its interpretation and application.

## **4. ROLE OF THE TREASURER**

### **The Treasurer has the following duties and responsibilities:**

- 4.1** functions as one of the Office Bearers of the Board
- 4.2** ensures that processes for the proper accounting of monies received, and accounting and authorisation of expenditures made, are established in accordance with the Associations Incorporation Act, 1985; the agreement with the Commonwealth Government and other regulatory requirements and that all necessary legal requirements for notification are met
- 4.3** chairs the Finance Committee meetings
- 4.4** sets the agenda for the Finance Committee meetings with the Business Manager
- 4.5** in conjunction with the Principal, presents recommendations on the budget planning process and timeline to the Board of Governors
- 4.6** presents the recommended draft and final budgets for operating and capital budgets to the Board of Governors on behalf of the Finance Committee
- 4.7** reports progress against budget to the Board of Governors
- 4.8** reports and explains to the Board of Governors any variations compared to budgets, recommended adjustments and the plan to respond to
- 4.9** in conjunction with the Principal, recommends to the governing council appropriate policies to ensure financial plans, governance practices and administrative controls are in place to safeguard the assets of the school
- 4.10** ensures authorised signatories are established in accordance with the Constitution
- 4.11** presents the annual audited financial statements and budgets at the Annual General Meeting, on behalf of the Board of Governors
- 4.12** monitors issues and trends that may affect the financial performance of the Centre in the short and long term

## **5. ROLE OF THE CHAIRPERSON**

**In planning and conducting a meeting, it is the role of the Chairperson to:**

- 5.1** help create an atmosphere in which each member is able to make an effective contribution
- 5.2** facilitate introductions so that all members know one another
- 5.3** help the group establish clearly the actual issue at hand, the goal to be set, the problem to be solved, or the purpose of the meeting
- 5.4** encourage participation of all members, calling upon less vocal members, and allowing for periods of silence
- 5.5** help the group consider all possible alternatives, solutions or activities
- 5.6** summarise the discussion from time to time, reviewing the steps covered
- 5.7** help the group move on when a point has been adequately discussed
- 5.8** conclude the discussions by reviewing:
  - a) the question, goal, problem or purpose
  - b) the alternatives, solutions or activities
  - c) who will be responsible for what and when
  - d) unfinished discussion to be held over for the next meeting
- 5.9** ensure agreement is reached on a final decision by hearing each member's position and by taking a vote of all members
- 5.10** start and finish all meetings on time
- 5.11** set the time, date and place for the next meeting, where necessary

*Note: Although this function is usually performed by the President, the Chair can be rotated or another member, other than the President, can be appointed where this is deemed worthwhile.*

## **6. ROLE OF THE SECRETARY**

Ordinarily, the Administrator performs the functions of the Secretary to the Board, in a non-voting capacity. However, the Board has the flexibility to appoint a person other than the Administrator should the need arise.

### **The Secretary has the following duties and responsibilities:**

- 6.1** in conjunction with the President and the Principal, makes the necessary preparations for holding Board and General meetings, including the preparation and circulation of agendas and reports, where possible, at least one week prior to the meeting
- 6.2** attends all Board and General meetings and acts as Minute Secretary to record the votes, decisions and minutes of all proceedings
- 6.3** ensures that minutes are circulated to members promptly after all meetings
- 6.4** one week after circulating to Board members, ensures that the minutes are displayed at each campus
- 6.5** as directed by, and on behalf of the Board, prepares records and forwards all necessary correspondence: receives and documents all incoming correspondence
- 6.6** acts as the Board's archivist filing copies of all documentation pertaining to the Board in a central file at the Centre's main office and ensuring that such files are available, if required, at any official meeting
- 6.7** ensures that all Board members receive a copy of the Board Members' Handbook and the Constitution immediately after their election, or on being co-opted to the Board
- 6.8** keeps records on file at the Centre's main office of the names, addresses and telephone numbers of all members of the Centre, specifically identifying the members of the Board, its Committees and Work Groups.

## **7. ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL**

The Principal, as Chief Executive Officer, is appointed by, responsible to, and gives fullest loyalty and support to the Board.

### **The Principal has the following duties and responsibilities in relation to the Board of Governors:**

- 7.1** responsible for administering the total operation of the Southern Montessori Education Centre Inc. in accordance with the policies set down by the Board
- 7.2** together with the Business Manager and Treasurer, ensures the responsible financial management of the Centre's budgets
- 7.3** responsible for the education of the children enrolled with the Southern Montessori Education Centre Inc according to the Montessori principles and the use of the learning materials of the Montessori method
- 7.4** acts as the primary liaison person between staff and Board
- 7.5** works towards establishing a close relationship of respect and trust with the Board Members.
- 7.6** with the President, s/he may share more confidential information: staff/student troubles or problems within the school community. Should there be any question of a staff dismissal or student expulsion, the Principal will consult the President before taking irrevocable action
- 7.7** attends Board meetings and provides a monthly report
- 7.8** provides a report for the Annual General Meeting
- 7.9** takes a key role in policy development and demonstrates to the Board that policies are being implemented effectively
- 7.10** provides guidance to the Board where there is an educational and /or Montessori viewpoint on an issue
- 7.11** is an ex-officio member of all committees
- 7.12** has delegated responsibility for the employment and management of staff as determined by the Board
- 7.13** has administrative leeway in the absence of Board policy  
*Note: In cases where immediate action must be taken within the school system and where the Board has provided no guidelines for administrative action, the Principal shall have power to act, but his/her decisions shall be subject to review by the Board at its next scheduled meeting. It shall be the duty of the Principal to inform the Board promptly of such action and of the need for Policy.*
- 7.14** for his/her own and the Board's satisfaction, there should be regular evaluations of the Principal's performance, against agreed criteria
- 7.15** is a co-signatory of cheques
- 7.16** writes a Principal's article for the newsletter.

## **8. ROLE OF THE STAFF NOMINEE**

**The staff nominee at Board is an ex-officio position. The staff nominee role will ensure that:**

- 8.1** staff members are kept informed of staff/Board issues via discussion at staff meetings and by other means as may be practical, such as memos
- 8.2** s/he will canvass staff on issues via staff meetings and by other means as may be necessary, eg questionnaires
- 8.3** issues raised at Board and pertaining to staff are included on staff meeting agendas
- 8.4** through due processes, staff positions on issues are established and that such positions, democratically arrived at, are fairly represented at Board level
- 8.5** s/he attends all staff and Board meetings and that where this is not possible, will duly notify and brief their nominated delegate to represent them.

## **9. COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD**

Committees are formed by the Board to allow a smaller group of members to give specialised attention to particular areas.

### **THE PRESIDENT AND PRINCIPAL ARE “EX-OFFICIO” TO ALL COMMITTEES**

#### **9.1 COMMITTEES**

- are established to have an on-going responsibility for particular aspects of the Board's overall task

#### **9.2 STANDING COMMITTEES**

- are established to have an on-going responsibility for a particular aspect of the Board's overall tasks
- comprise both Board Members and Ordinary Members of the Centre

#### **9.3 SUNSET COMMITTEES OR WORK GROUPS**

- established for a specific purpose and disbanded once that specific task has been completed. Comprises both Board Members and Ordinary Members of the Centre. For instance:

##### **9.3.1 NOMINATIONS**

Vice President (Convener)

##### **9.3.2 POLICY**

Principal (Convener)

##### **9.3.3 BUILDINGS & GROUNDS**

1 Board Member – being the B & G Coordinator (Convener) Ordinary Members

##### **9.3.4 PARENTS & FRIENDS**

1 Board Member – being the P & F Coordinator (Convener) Ordinary Members

##### **9.3.5 STRATEGIC PLANNING**

1 Board Member – being the Strategic Planning Coordinator (Convener) Ordinary Members

**Note:** *The Chairperson of each Committee is to be chosen from within the Committee and will be a Board Member, other than Finance where the nominated Chairperson is the Treasurer. This will facilitate reporting and liaison at Board level.*

*The Chairperson and Members of the Committees responsible for significant tasks are required to give regular reports to the Principal.*

## **10. FINANCE COMMITTEE**

### **The Finance Committee is required to:**

- 10.1** prepare an annual budget and make recommendations on fees for all programs
- 10.2** monitor expenditure against budget, investigate major variations, and recommend appropriate action to the Board
- 10.3** consider proposals for major items of expenditure and advise the Board
- 10.4** monitor Government policy on funding, and make recommendations to the Board for long term financial policy
- 10.5** develop and maintain a 3 - 5 year, long term, financial plan
- 10.6** ensure the maintenance of a Plant Register and a Depreciation Register

### **MEMBERSHIP**

Treasurer (Chairperson)

Principal (ex-officio)

President (ex-officio)

Business Manager

Board Member

## **11. STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE**

The Strategic Planning Committee is required to:

- 11.1** consult with the Centre's community every 5 years to develop a 5 year strategic
- 11.2** set measurable actions for each strategic plan goal. Track progress and assess effectiveness of resource use.
- 11.3** work with the Finance Committee as needed to ensure a financial planning budget is allocated to each strategic plan goal
- 11.4** report to the Board on recommendations about the Strategic Plan as well as progress towards each goal outlined in the Strategic Plan
- 11.5** provide feedback to the Board and committees of priorities and goals being aligned with those of the Centre's vision and mission statements
- 11.6** periodically assesses progress on goals and make adjustments as necessary given the circumstances
- 11.7** assist leadership in the formulation and communication of vision and mission statements
- 11.8** recommend action by the Board, as necessary, to direct committees regarding activities consistent with the vision and mission of the Centre

### **MEMBERSHIP**

Treasurer

Principal (ex-officio)

President (ex-officio)

Business Manager

Board Members (2)

Ordinary Members and such expertise as may at times be needed from outside professionals.

## **12. PARENTS & FRIENDS COMMITTEE**

**The Parents & Friends Committee, under the leadership of the Parents & Friends Coordinator is required to:**

- 12.1** develop and organise a series of fundraising events to raise an annual income as established by the Board in consultation with the P & F
- 12.2** develop and organise social events to enhance a sense of community with SMECI and increase participation of parents

*Note: All social events should have a reasonable expectation of covering costs.*

- 12.3** assist with catering supplies and set up at school functions, where necessary
- 12.4** provide full documentation and reconciliation at all levels to ensure accurate and complete records are maintained and ensure that all forms will be made available to the Auditor as necessary
- 12.5** keeps records of events as a reference, should a similar event be held in the future
- 12.6** ensure that the Centre abides by all regulations concerning alcohol at any event organised by the P & F Committee

*Note: The P&F Coordinator is responsible for all liquor licence applications. These must be made at least fourteen (14) days before any event where alcohol is involved.*

- 12.7** provide regular Bulletin articles and notices to ensure that the school community is kept informed of events
- 12.8** understand and support that the allocation and expenditure of fundraising monies will proceed according to the guidelines and procedures outlined in the Expenditure of Fundraising Monies Policy and that the final decision rests with the Board

## 12.9 PROCEDURES

- 12.9:1** the P & F Committee, under the direction of the P & F Coordinator, (who is an elected Board member and is directly responsible to the Board), will consider the ways and means of raising money through a series of events during the year
- The events will look to raise money from within the parent body, but will attempt to involve the wider community as much as possible
- 12.9:2** the P & F Coordinator (being a Board member) will present to the Board the suggested events and anticipated income & expenditure
- Approval from the Board may be given prior to any event taking place.
- 12.9:3** fundraising and social events must not conflict with the aims of the Southern Montessori Education Centre Inc. Advice on this to be sought from the Principal
- 12.9:4** prior consultation with the Principal or Administrator must occur regarding suggested dates of events, to ensure there is no conflict with school-based activities
- 12.9:5** Prior approval must be given by the Principal or Business Manager for all letters issued by the P & F Committee. Letters are to be on school letterhead.
- Notices issued for the first time are to be sighted by the Principal or Administrator prior to dispatch.
- All staff are to be issued with a copy of each notice.
- 12.9:6** The Business Manager is to be kept fully informed of all anticipated expenditures and income, particularly the time frame involved in the outlay of money.
- 12.9:7** All money received must be receipted as soon as possible and held in a secure place until banked.
- A summary of receipts will be written up and reconciled with the correct money and given to the Administrator for banking purposes.
- 12.9:8** The P & F Coordinator will report to the Board at each Board meeting of events ongoing and completed.
- 12.9:9** Once the event has been completed, all documentation will be filed in the Main Office.

## **13. POLICY COMMITTEE**

Policy making and policy review are on-going processes and follow the steps outlined below:

- 13.1 the first step is the recognition of the need for a new policy or the review of an existing policy
- 13.2. the POLICY COMMITTEE lists each issue in order of need and suggests a time frame within which the policy should be finalised
- 13.3 the POLICY COMMITTEE researches the situation, identifies the main issues (“policy elements”), states alternative courses of action and the anticipated consequences of each, and gives their recommendations to the Board
- 13.4 the policy recommendation is presented to the Board and given a “first reading”. Modifications and/or further research may be required of the Policy Committee
- 13.4 the Policy Committee presents the final draft policy to the Board and a vote is made on its adoption
- 13.5 the actual policy statement is presented at Board for ratification
- 13.6 the policy is made public
- 13.7 the policy is entered in the Policy Manual and implemented

### **13.8 POLICY FORMULATION PROCEDURE**

- 13.8:1** Document the existing practice.
- 13.8:2** Document the requirements for the new/revised policy.
- 13.8:3** Collate what information is on hand and arrange for additional information from other sources, if required.
- 13.8:4** Assess what input is required from people outside the Policy Committee, with expertise and/or interest in the policy. Arrange for their help. A working party should gain information from as wide a range of sources as possible.
- 13.8:5** Set a timetable for policy writing.
- 13.8:6** The policy should be written in clear, concise language (free of jargon). It should state the purpose and broad guidelines with the procedure for carrying out the policy.  
  
A review date should be established.
- 13.8:7** When the policy has been checked and refined, the draft is submitted to the Board and staff for consideration.
- 13.8:8** Final draft is ratified by Board.

## **14. BOARD MEMBERS REPRESENTING THE SCHOOL**

**Board Members who have the opportunity to represent the Centre in an official capacity need to adhere to the following guidelines:**

**14.1** where possible, wear the official school badge

**14.2** remember that any comments made by a Board member may be taken as the official view of the Centre

**14.3** at an official function, the Board representative needs to listen attentively and, as a general rule, assume an observer's role, taking a relatively passive position on issues raised

The school's position on an issue can really only be given if this has been previously discussed, and an agreed position has been determined by the Board.

*Note: At times, much can be learned from observing other schools' representatives, who may be more experienced.*

**14.4** utmost respect must be shown at all times for the confidentiality of Board and Centre matters

**14.5** any discussions with other people need to reflect the Centre in a positive light as inappropriate or negative comments can quickly become viewed as fact and bring the Centre into disrepute

**14.6** note taking is strongly recommended, as the Board representative will need to present a report of proceedings and make appropriate recommendations

Copies of any handouts should be attached to the official report for future reference.

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