



November 12, 2022  
Quarterly and Annual Board Meeting  
Montessori School of Englewood

Location: WebEx

Present:

Board Members: Karen Anderson, Joe Motto, Jim Sulzer, Peter Cunningham, Ebonie Townsend, Gabrielle Sansonetti, Rita Nolan, Peter Talmers (joined after item III below)

School staff: Maggie Mikuzis

Board Members Absent: Tanesha Peeples, Marv Hoffman, Tiffany White

Focus Strategic Partners: Seth Kaufman

Meeting minutes and recording taken by: Joe Motto

I. Call to Order

Anderson called the meeting to order 9:00am

Motto took roll. Board members Anderson, Sulzer, Cunningham, Motto, Townsend, Sansonetti, and Nolan, Mikuzis, and Kaufman announced themselves present.

II. Approval of Minutes

Draft minutes from the June 2022 quarterly board meeting were circulated in advance of the meeting. See Ex. A. Sulzer moved to approve the minutes as drafted. Townsend seconded the motion. Anderson, Motto, Sulzer, Cunningham, Townsend, and Sansonetti voted to approve. None opposed or abstained. Motion passed.

III. Bylaws Amendments

Anderson led discussion concerning various proposed amendments to the school bylaws, as shown in the attached redline. See Ex. B. These include reducing the number of required board members from 12 to 10, permitting two school staff members to join the board as non-voting members, and certain other items. Discussion ensued.



Sulzer moved to adopt the proposed amended bylaws. Motto seconded. Anderson, Sulzer, Townsend, Sansonetti, and Cunningham voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed. The operative bylaws are attached as Ex. C hereto.

*At this point, Talmers joined the meeting.*

IV. Development/Spring Fundraiser

Nolan led discussion on the state of our development efforts across individual fundraising, corporate fundraising, and grants as of this point in the year. We have additionally received on-kind gifts and contributions from the Trotter Project, Donors Choose, St. Andrew's Philoptochos Society, the University of Chicago, INCS, and the Lawyers Lend a Hand to Youth program.

Discussion was had that we will plan to host an in-person fundraiser at Winston & Strawn's offices in the spring of 2023. Details to follow.

V. Audit/Finance Committee

Motto led discussion on the current finance report. *See Ex. D.* We are modestly ahead of budget through October due to prior year (i.e., tardy) Head Start revenue that was received this year, as well as below-budget personnel expenses.

We additionally received a clean audit report, which the Executive Committee voted to approve for execution and submission to CPS.

VI. Building Report

Mikuzis delivered the building report. Items of discussion included:

- We are currently undergoing various facilities inspections, for example for elevators (which were found to be in compliance);
- Chimney and door replacement project has been completed;
- There was a roof evaluation yesterday; we may be in line to receive a new roof;
- Twelve tubes for the boiler needed to be replaced at a cost of \$8,000; we have a \$25,000 contingency in the budget for building expenses;



- Playground construction is scheduled to begin April 2023.

#### VII. Executive Director Report and Discussion of Test Scores

Nolan delivered in advance a written Executive Director's report. See Ex. E. Items of note included that attendance is currently at 90%, whereas we are aiming for 95%; we've seen a 2.95% increase in insurance costs, compared to 25% last year; and our successful Special Education funding appeal, through which we will receive \$203,678 in additional funding for this year.

An additional item of considerable discussion was our ISBE Summative Designation of "needing comprehensive support," meaning falling in the bottom 5% of the state, based on a variety of metrics across all students. In 2018/2019 and prior to that, our designation was "commendable." With the pandemic, for the past two years, we received no designation.

Ordinarily, the designation of "needing comprehensive support" would require a four-year comprehensive cycle of support. But certain schools including ours will be allowed an "early exit" if we satisfy certain criteria. Kaufman's presentation describing those criteria and related data is attached as Ex. F. Kaufman walked through how the metrics were changed in the testing, how we scored, and some of the major drivers. For example, chronic absenteeism was a major negative factor for us, as it did not distinguish between excused versus unexcused absences, thus necessarily disproportionality impacting schools in communities where COVID hit harder than others.

#### VIII. Health and Wellness

Townsend discussed the underway reconstitution of the Health and Wellness committee of the board and led conversation as to the challenges faced by our families in obtaining quality health care. A number of ideas for projects and services were discussed, including providing informational binders and care packages as to available resources, developmental milestones, reference materials, and how to get the most out of available insurance and other service coverage. Townsend was applauded for driving this effort.

#### IX. Head Start

Nolan delivered the Head Start report. One item of interest is that enrollment in early childhood programming has become a competitive issue given the expansion of Preschool for All. Discussion was had concerning this issue and getting the three-year age grouping back for young children at MSE.



Also, circulated in advance of the meeting were the minutes from the recent Parent Policy Committee Meetings. *See Ex. G.* Sulzer moved to approve the minutes. Cunningham seconded. All board members noted above voted in favor. None opposed or abstained. Motion passed.

X. Reports from MSE Staff

None.

XI. New Business

None.

XII. Public Comment

There was no public comment. With no further business, the public meeting was adjourned. The next quarterly board meeting is scheduled for January 23, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.

Sulzer made a motion pursuant to Section 2(c)(1) of the Open Meetings Act to go into closed session for the purpose of discussing the performance of the Executive Director. Motto seconded the motion. All board members noted above voted in favor. None opposed or abstained. Motion passed. The meeting therefore went into closed session for the purpose of discussing the performance of the Executive Director.

Meeting adjourned at 10:58 AM.

XIII. Evaluation of Executive Director (close session)

A verbatim record of this closed portion of the meeting was kept pursuant to the requirements of the Open Meetings Act.

# Exhibit A



June 13, 2022  
Quarterly Board Meeting  
Montessori School of Englewood

Location: WebEx

Present:

Board Members: Thom Hale, Quilen Blackwell, Karen Anderson, Joe Motto, Jim Sulzer, Peter Cunningham, Tanesha Peeples, Marv Hoffman, Ebonie Townsend, Peter Talmers, Marcus Robinson, Gabrielle Sansonetti, Rita Nolan

School staff: Numerous

Meeting minutes and video recordings taken by: Joe Motto

I. Call to Order

Hale called the meeting to order. Blackwell took roll. Hale, Blackwell, Motto, Sulzer, Anderson, Sulzer, Cunningham, Peeples, Hoffman, Townsend, Talmers, Robinson, Sansonetti, and Nolan announced themselves present (some joining the meeting a few minutes late).

II. April 2022 Board Meeting Minutes

The minutes from the April 2022 quarterly board meeting were circulated in advance of the meeting. See Ex. A. Sulzer moved that the minutes be approved, Blackwell seconded. All board members present identified above voted in favor, none opposed.

III. Finance

Motto delivered in advance of the meeting and led discussion on:

- finances through the third quarter, which is a positive narrative, generally tracking close to budget via use of the contingency fund, which compensated for the one major unexpected negative budget factor during the year (the unbudgeted pension contributions), see Ex. B;
- our performance against CPS scorecard metrics to date, as to which at present we are tracking close to hitting all four (including cash on hand and cash relative to expenses); and



- proposed budget for school year 2023. *See* Ex. C. Discussion of the proposed budget ensued. Anderson moved to adopt the budget. Sulzer seconded. All board members present identified above voted in favor, none opposed.

#### IV. Change in Board President

Hale's resignation from the board was discussed. Extensive thanks and praise was shared for Hale's incredibly successful and exemplary twelve years of school leadership.

Anderson moved that the board construct a succession committee comprised of Cunningham and Robinson to lead the identification of the next board president. Discussion ensued as to that process pursuant to the memo. circulated by Cunningham and Robinson prior to the meeting. *See* Ex. D. Motto seconded the motion. All board members present identified above voted in favor, not opposed. Motion passed.

#### V. Grants and Conflicts

Sansonetti led discussion about potential risks associated with grant applications and board conflicts of interests. Sansonetti moved for the board's approval that she conduct a review of school grants and the current school policy concerning conflict of interests set forth in the bylaws. Anderson seconded. All board members present identified above voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed.

#### VI. Antidiscrimination Policy

Anderson circulated in advance of the meeting and led discussion concerning a proposed school antidiscrimination policy. *See* Ex. E. Anderson moved to adopt the policy. Blackwell seconded. All board members present identified above voted in favor, none opposed. Motion passed.

#### VII. Head Start Policies

Nolan circulated in advance of the meeting and led discussion on a collection of proposed Head Start policies as to subjects including data management; incident and accident reporting; job descriptions; and grievances. *See* Ex. F. Anderson moved to approve the policies. Sulzer seconded. All board members present identified above voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed.



#### VIII. Executive Director's Report

Nolan circulated in advance of the meeting and led discussion of the Executive Director's report. *See* Ex. G. Highlighted items included:

- upcoming eight grade graduation
- enrollment
- school safety and security status and improvements
- facilities improvements, such as a new intercoms system and outdoor classroom space
- certain required staff training
- board training and conflicts of interest form requirements, as relevant to the governance aspect of our charter renewal, and other items of focus for the renewal process, such as finances and student discipline
- certain staff accomplishments
- fundraising
- various other interesting school events, partnerships, and programs

#### IX. Executive Director Contract Extension

Extension and lengthy discussion was had concerning the length of the extension for the Executive Director's contract, the current iteration of which is due to expire on June 30, 2022. Multiple school staff members appeared and gave their thoughts.

Anderson moved that the board approve a three-year extension. Cunningham seconded.

Anderson moved pursuant to sections 2(c)(1), (11), and (12) of the Open Meetings Act that the board go into closed session for further discussion on the Executive Director's performance and evaluation of the potential extension. Sulzer seconded the motion. All board members present identified above voted in favor. None opposed. The board then went into closed session.





The board came out of closed session and back into open session. A vote was then held concerning Anderson's motion for a three-year extension to the Executive Director's contract. Hale voted in favor. Anderson voted in favor. Motto voted in favor. Cunningham voted in favor. Robinson opposed. Hoffman voted in favor. Talmers opposed. Peebles voted in favor. Townsend voted in favor. Sulzer voted in favor. Sansonetti voted in favor. Blackwell opposed. The motion for a three-year extension passed.

X.     Public Comment

Opportunity was given for public comment.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

# Exhibit A



April 2, 2022  
Board Meeting  
Montessori School of Englewood

Location: WebEx

Present:

Board Members: Thom Hale, Karen Anderson, Jim Sulzer, Joe Motto, Marcus Robinson, Peter Talmers, Peter Cunningham, Mike Sculnick, Tanesha Peeples, Gabrielle Sansonetti

Administration: Rita Nolan

Consultant: Matt Moeller

Meeting recorded by video and minutes taken by: Joe Motto

I. Call to Order

Hale calling the meeting to order. The board expressed sincere gratitude to Mike Sculnick's invaluable service to the board since its founding. Mike is retiring from the board effective from this meeting. His expertise, support, and guidance will be remembered and serve as a model for other board members.

The board advanced through the agenda attached as Exhibit A.

II. Finance and Development

Motto delivered in advance of the meeting and led discussion through the quarterly finance report, see Exhibit B. We are tracking relatively close to budget through February 2022, notwithstanding the unbudgeted CPS pension contribution issue previously surfaced, due to positive enrollment, prudent expense management, and solid fundraising. We will closely manage our government funding budgeting and vouchering through year-end. We are also looking to finalize our accounting relationship.

The single audit of Head Start completed on March 15

Working with CPS vendor Claridigm, we have updated our fiscal policies and procedures. Approvals and training will follow.



Hale and Nolan led discussion on fundraising. Fundraising has been good this year, and we have additional leads. But we need to do more to increase our assets and build up a capital base—ideally working toward three months’ expenses cash on hand.

### III. Executive Director Report

Nolan delivered in advance of the meeting and led discussion through the executive director’s report, see Exhibit C. Fulsome discussion was had concerning support for the school, teachers, and community in this challenging environment. Nolan elaborated on our work with Claridigm, including with respect to governance and programmatic issues. Additional discussion was had concerning operational improvements funded through CPS capital funding.

### IV. Head Start Report

Nolan delivered the quarterly report concerning Head Start.

Head Start attendance is low. Enrollment is 68 out of 70 as of March. All staff openings have been filled, and our Head Start teachers are receiving Montessori coaching.

### V. Charter Renewal

Discussion was had concerning our two-year charter renewal. Anderson made a motion to authorize the Executive Committee to execute the renewal and to negotiate such potential changes as might be deemed appropriate and agreed with CPS. Robinson seconded. Discussion ensued. All voted in favor. None opposed. Motion passed.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

# Exhibit A

**The Montessori Network Board Agenda**  
**April 2nd, 2022**

1. **Intro** Thomas Hale
2. **Old Business** Thomas Hale
3. **Financial Update** Joe Motto
4. **Development Update** Thomas Hale
5. **Executive Director's Report**Rita Nolan
6. **New Business**
7. **Public Comments**

# Exhibit B