III. Succession Plan

Montessori Education Centre strives to create an environment that puts the child's needs first. While we depend on the leadership of our District Administrator, a leader that oversees the day-to-day operation of the school, as well as the execution of instruction and instructional policy, the District Administrator also establishes best practices to create a school that grows students by way of an entire educational community. The District Administrator is thus supported by the faculty and staff and the Board of Directors, and it becomes their mission to ensure the long-term success and stability of the school.

MEC is unique in that it is a Montessori school and relies on Montessorians to preserve the integrity of the program and cultivate the growth of our school's educational achievement. Because of this relatively limited pool of potential team members, it is imperative for the decision makers at MEC to be extra-diligent in preparing for a time when the District Administrator, Faculty/Staff Advisor, a Principal, or faculty needs to be replaced. The subsequent Succession Plan is designed to provide a process that addresses such transition times and also develops a clear leadership pipeline to allow for the growth of team members toward appropriate levels of responsibility and contribution.

A. CHARTER HOLDER

The Charter Holder maintains the following succession plan to replace directors on the corporate Board and to ensure the continuity of the school and its strong governance. When a director resigns, the Board President solicits requests for nominations of qualified individuals from the directors and key staff members. The pool of candidates is typically drawn from stakeholders in the school such as teachers, community partners, and parents. Once nominations are submitted, the Board President interviews the candidates to determine their willingness and ability to fulfill the responsibilities of Board membership (including, but not limited to, regular attendance at Board meetings, school observation and evaluation, support at campus events, and review of significant filings). Furthermore, in addition to verifying the candidate's appropriate fingerprint clearance card and Affidavit Disclosure and Consent for Background and Credit Check for the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools, the Board president also ensures the candidate's commitment to the mission of the school. The Board Handbook states: A member of the Montessori Education Centre Board of Directors ('Board') shall have a firm belief in the Montessori education delivery format and shall be committed to using the Montessori program and other curriculum as approved by the Board. Members of the Board ('Directors') shall be fully committed to the charter school concept.

The Handbook stipulation is intended to protect the continuity of the Charter in the event of Board turnover. Once a candidate is found that meets the requirements stated in the Board Handbook and is committed to the school's mission, his/her name is presented at an open meeting for approval from the Board.

B. LEADERSHIP TEAM & INSTRUCTIONAL TEAM

The Leadership Team is composed of the District Administrator, Faculty/Staff Advisor and a Principal at each campus. The Leadership Team shares oversight in key areas of charter management, academic programs and campus administration. Each member of the Leadership Team takes a management role in supervising and evaluating staff, as well as updating policies, procedures and curriculum. Special training and professional development is provided to members of the Leadership Team to prepare them to assume

a management role anywhere at MEC within any area of their expertise, should the need arise. When additional expertise or skill sets are deemed beneficial to specific goals or objectives, a Faculty Consultant (qualified faculty member) will be included in the Leadership Team.

The Leadership Team meets monthly to address school-wide issues and allow for shared responsibility and consideration in decision making for all areas of school administration, including handling school discipline issues and training new staff members. A portion of these meetings is dedicated to documenting policies and procedures.

Because of the integral nature of their position to the school, the following plans are detailed for replacing members of the Leadership Team:

- In the event of a **District Administrator** vacancy, the Board of Directors shall designate a Transition Team to manage the school and assist in hiring a replacement for the District Administrator. Membership on the Transition Team, while at the discretion of the Board, may include members of the Leadership Team, current members of the Board of Directors, and significant community partners who have agreed to serve on this critical committee in a volunteer capacity should the need arise. The Transition Team will first designate an Interim District Administrator who can readily assume the duties of District Administrator (until a candidate is thoroughly vetted) and will then thoroughly review the District Administrator job description. Next, the Transition Team will establish a timeline and budget for completing the hiring process. Qualified resumes will be collected through all appropriate channels, the Transition Team will select and contact candidates from those resumes, and, finally, the Board will meet with the Transition Team to interview those candidates. After deliberation and analysis, the President of the Board of Directors will contact the candidate chosen and offer the position.
- In the event of a **Faculty/Staff Advisor** vacancy, the District Administrator will appoint a Transition Advisor (until a candidate is thoroughly vetted). Qualified candidates will be considered from the MEC leadership pipeline. A qualified candidate will have the following attributes: (a) at least three years experience at MEC; (b) experience serving as Faculty Consultant on the Leadership Team; (c) willing to undergo Montessori administrator training. The District Administrator will also review the Faculty/Staff Advisor's job description and establish a timeline and budget for completing the hiring process. Once candidates have been identified, the District Administrator will interview the candidates and select one to present to the Board.
- In the event of a **Principal** vacancy, the Faculty/Staff Advisor will assume the role of Interim Principal (until a candidate is thoroughly vetted). Qualified candidates will be considered from both existing staff and outside sources; the District Administrator will determine where to announce the vacancy. Candidates should be willing to undergo Montessori administrator training, and it would be beneficial for candidates to have Montessori training in Primary, Lower Elementary, and Upper Elementary. The District Administrator and Faculty/Staff Advisor will review the Principal's job description and establish a timeline and budget for completing the hiring process. Once candidates have been identified, the District Administrator and Faculty/Staff Advisor will interview the candidates and select one to present to the Board.

In order to provide for qualified candidates for the above and other vital positions at MEC, to preserve the integrity of the program, and to ensure best practices in the directive of putting the child's needs first, a leadership pipeline exists in the form of an evolving, committed Instructional Team. MEC recognizes that its greatest resource is the Instructional Team, and, therefore, works to initiate and maintain a cohesive and proficient group. Continuity of the Instructional Team is protected by requiring all teachers to be Montessori trained, to serve as a student teacher for one year in an MEC classroom, and to participate in the school's mentoring program that pairs new teachers with veteran teachers to impart knowledge gained through experience. Once in place, teachers must undertake 12 hours of additional professional training annually (opportunity for which is often provided by the school – see Incentive Plan below).

The Classroom Site Fund (301) provides a clear Incentive Plan for the Instructional Team at Montessori Education Centre. In that teacher attendance is imperative in providing education to our students, an Attendance Bonus is granted to each salaried member; our teaching staff accrues (9) paid sick and/or personal leave days at a rate of one day per month during the school year. During 301 review meetings, MEC, at its discretion, may compensate a teacher for any accrued but unused sick and/or personal leave days. After the Attendance Bonus is paid, the remaining balance of MEC's 301 Teacher Performance Fund is divided by the number of Charter School students that attend the school. Each teacher then receives a bonus based on the number of students in their classroom along with the fulfillment of academic achievement goals set in a meeting with the Principal at the beginning of the school year.

Montessori Education Centre believes investment in teacher's growth is vital in the development of human capital. MEC provides many opportunities for professional development to the Instructional Team. The school informs teachers of, encourages teachers to, and makes accommodations for teachers to attend seminars or training throughout the school year. After staff members have completed one year of employment with the school, MEC will pay 50% of the fees for approved seminars and training programs. Continuing education (college courses in education only) may be reimbursed at a rate of 50% if the grade earned is a B or above and a two year teaching commitment is set with MEC. The school will also pay 50% of the costs associated with Montessori training in return for a commitment to teach at MEC.

MEC believes that teacher quality is the single most important in-school factor in the quality of education. MEC teachers are expected to hold a Montessori Certification and adhere to the standards set forth by the American Montessori Society. Each classroom is required to have one teacher with at least a Bachelor's degree; several MEC classrooms are lead by teachers possessing a Master's degree. Even with these required basic credentials, the school sustains a culture and infrastructure of continuous improvement that serves to maintain the long-term success of the Instruction Team and, therefore, the students. Teachers are to have a future-oriented mind set that leads to developing teacher leadership competency. To this end, MEC encourages teachers to continue to grow as educators by not only pursuing higher education or attending state and national professional development conferences, seminars or workshops, but also by taking on leadership roles within the school and the community that may develop into regional, state and/or national level participation in activities that give an Instructional Team member broad perspectives on the function and merits of leadership. It is the goal of Montessori Education Centre to continue to stimulate an in-flow of ever increasing talent in both teaching and leadership.