II. Sustainability

B. STRENGTH AND STABILITY OF THE GOVERNING BODY

Montessori Education Centre believes that successfully executing its growth and sustainability requires strong governance and savvy management. As the organization continues to thrive, it is even more important to continue to employ and then advance individuals and, in turn, allow for policies to support growth. To formalize its core processes for consistency across the organization and to continue building a culture of learners, the governing body must use the tools and information at its disposal to set those policies in place. The ability to do so and the strength of the current MEC Governing Board lies primarily in the diversity of its members' skills: administrative and business experience, legal expertise, facility and construction knowledge, extensive Montessori educational practice, teaching experience, background in the arts and communication fields, Montessori certification, and long-term parent involvement with the school. This Governing Board holds the combined skills to effectively lead MEC, provide scrupulous guidance, and ensure that the school meets its charter goals and vision while adhering to its mission.

Part One:

The current Governing Board members are:

- **Tammy Whiting** founded Montessori Children's Center, a private school, in 1986 and served as Administrator/Principal of that financially solvent and flourishing institution for ten years prior to the granting of the Charter. She was actively involved in classrooms during that time, not only as the Administrator/Principal, but as a hands-on participant in the instructional process. In addition to her administrative and business background, she holds a degree in early childhood education, which, coupled with her experience in the classroom, prepared her for her significant role as instructional leader at MEC. With a firm belief in providing families with viable educational options, she applied, in 1996, for a Charter from the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools and received the contract for the new non-profit Montessori Education Centre – Charter School (MEC). In 2001, she opened a second (North) campus. Upon Ms. Whiting's initiation, and after an exhaustive self-study and external review process spanning the course of several years, MEC received formal accreditation status from the American Montessori Society for both campuses in 2008. MEC is the only Montessori school in Arizona to receive this coveted accreditation. Ms. Whiting continues to provide MEC Governing Board members with a clear vision and the administrative, business, and instructional expertise to successfully implement that vision.
- **Johna Martinez** has been involved with MEC for nearly a decade, when she first enrolled her child at the school. Ms. Martinez holds a degree in health, with a minor in health administration, from New Mexico State University. Her degree provides the Governing Board with valuable insights into meeting Arizona recommended guidelines for health, safety and physical education. She has also served in an administrative capacity at MEC, giving her intimate knowledge of the daily functions and broad principles that drive the school to its mission. She has held a significant leadership role as the MEC Parent-Teacher Organization President in 2004. Ms. Martinez has also recently earned her American Montessori Society certification for teaching children ages 3-6 and is a teacher at MEC-Mesa Campus. Because of her instructional, administrative, and health experience and background, she is a valued member of the Governing Board.
- **Laura Davis** joined the Board of Directors in 2008 and has served as the Parent-Teacher Organization Secretary at Montessori Education Centre. Ms. Davis has also served on the committees of the International Interior Design Association and the Environmental Information Association, providing the MEC Governing Board with unique skills in the procedures and conventions of legislative bodies. Ms. Davis has worked in both the communication and construction fields and offers a wealth of experience to the Board in these two areas. She also

holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism with minors in English and music theater from Arizona State University. Furthermore, having enrolled her children at Montessori Education Centre in 2003 and periodically volunteering in the classroom, she provides an important parent perspective to the Governing Board. Her diverse procedural, business, facilities, and communications background, as well as her education in the journalistic and theater arts, provides the MEC Governing Board with a variety of expertise.

- **Marilise Hazime** joined the MEC Governing Board in 2005 as a parent of an enrolled student. As a valued member of the Board, she elected to continue her membership even after her children graduated from MEC. Because of, but not limited to, her degrees in both law and teaching, Ms. Hazime has been a significant source of information and guidance to the school. Her expertise in both of these critical areas is enhanced by her unique perspective being a native to Brazil and international traveler and provides the MEC Governing Board with significant wisdom on myriad issues.

Part Two:

Montessori Education Centre-Charter School seeks to recruit governing body members that have an interest and stake in the success of MEC. As such, most members are recruited from the parent community and school team members involved determinedly with the school. We also actively seek Board members who have the expertise to enhance the Board's breadth of capability. As an example, MEC is currently discussing the Board candidacy of Kevin Yirak. Mr. Yirak has been approached as an involved parent at the school and as a practicing CPA. We recognize the need for a director with financial acumen, and Mr. Yirak has 10 years of professional accounting experience in Arizona. Should he become a candidate, MEC protocol dictates that he will be screened by the Board President to ensure his commitment to the Montessori philosophy and verify his availability for Board meetings and capacity to take an active role in the Board process. The full Board votes on new members at an open meeting. Once appointed, training is provided in Open Meeting Law accompanied by a copy of the Arizona Open Meeting Law Book. Additionally, the Board Handbook, which outlines the mission and history of the school and policies established by the Governing Board, is given to new members to study and reference.

Part Three:

Montessori Education Centre is governed by its Board of Directors ("the Board") which also serves as the governing body of the school pursuant to A.R.S. 15-183 (E)(8). The purpose of the Board is to set the general direction and policy of the school. Directors are expected to govern in a manner that ensures adherence to the MEC mission statement. They should foster positive relationships with school personnel, the school community, and the community-at-large. The financial stability of the school is also of critical concern to the Board.

Specific duties of the Board, as outlined in the Board Handbook, include:

- upholding the mission statement, as well as the school's philosophy and objectives, when implementing policy.
- reviewing and/or approving significant school filings that have included and may continue to include: the Charter Renewal Business Plan and Performance Management Plan (PMP) (to include the review of progress and annual reports on the PMP at Board meetings); the Self-Study component of the American Montessori Society accreditation process; the Staff, Parent, and Student Handbooks; employment contracts.
- establishing policies for the Principals' operation of MEC, as well as ensuring that the provisions of the corporation's Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, the charter, and other contracts or agreements with the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools are being followed.
- establishing fiscal policy, including, but not limited to, budgets and financial controls for the schools. (The Board monitors the financial health of the school at every Board meeting by reviewing profit and loss statements and a detailed report of expenditures.)

- selecting a new District Administrator or Principal, when necessary.
- periodic observations and evaluations of each MEC campus, taking into consideration the school's philosophy and goals as stated in the mission statement.
- keeping full and accurate minutes of Board meetings and those of its ad hoc committees.
- maintaining a policy book so that governing decisions made over a period of years may be readily available to subsequent MEC directors and administrators.

Part Four:

The Board follows the Charter in determining the academic goals for the Montessori Education Centre and, in part, after annually reviewing the results of the AIMS tests, AYP and AZ Learns. With the information that will be provided through the Arizona Charter School Association concerning the growth of each student, the Board will evaluate academic preparedness. The Faculty/Staff Advisor will also give the Board an update on school-wide implementation processes of the Montessori curriculum and assessment results used throughout the year. These reports will include the status of any Performance Management Plan's progress. If the Board identifies a weakness through evaluation of any of the aforementioned information, recommendations will be made to correct the weakness through supplementary training and support materials, as appropriate. As an example of a preemptive measure, the Board has approved the purchase of "Buckle Down" AIMS test preparation booklets for the past 4 years to assist in increasing test mastery. MEC-Mesa Campus has improved from Performing Plus to Highly Performing to Excelling. MEC-North Campus has most often maintained the label of Performing Plus (as well as years labeled Highly Performing and Performing, the latter for which the Board has recommended additional assistance, training and extended teacher-effectiveness evaluations in order to correct this decline).