



# CORNERSTONE

MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Board of Directors Election  
Voting Guide  
2026

## I. Purpose of the Voting Guide

The purpose of this Voting Guide is to provide detailed information on election procedures and introduce you to the Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School Board of Directors candidates. This guide will include a profile of each candidate as submitted by the candidate.

## II. Eligibility to Vote

Eligible voters are faculty and staff members employed at the school, school board members and all parents or legal guardians of children enrolled in the school.

### Parents or Legal Guardians

- Parent is defined as the legal guardian of a student whose address has been given to CMES as the address of record to send school communications.
- Two-parent families with both parents living at the same address will each receive an e-ballot. This assumes that each parent's email address is on file at CMES as receiving school communications.
- Single-parent families will receive one e-ballot. This assumes that the parent's email address is on file at CMES as receiving school communications.
- Parents living at separate addresses will each receive an e-ballot. This assumes that each parent's email address is on file at CMES as receiving school communications.
- Parents who have not registered their email address with CMES as an address to send school communications will not receive an e-ballot. In order to vote, these parents should email [chrisbewell@cornerstone-elementary.org](mailto:chrisbewell@cornerstone-elementary.org) and identify themselves as parent/guardian of a CMES child and request an e-ballot be sent to their designated email address. If you do not have an email address and wish to vote, please call the school at 651-774-5000 for further instructions.

### Faculty and Staff

- Each CMES faculty and staff member will receive an e-ballot. Faculty and staff of the school who are also parents may only vote once.

### Current Board Member

- Board members who are also staff, faculty, or parents may only vote once.
- Board members who are not a parent or an employee are also eligible to vote.

## III. Election Procedures

The election will be held from May 11, 2026 beginning at 8:00 am until May 18, 2026 at 8:00 pm. Each eligible voter will receive notification when the election launches and be provided with eBallot information via email.

Results of the election will be presented at the Annual Meeting, which will be held on May 19 at 6:00 pm. All parents, faculty, and staff are encouraged to attend the Annual Meeting.

Please contact Chris Bewell at [chrisbewell@cornerstone-elementary.org](mailto:chrisbewell@cornerstone-elementary.org) for more information.

## IV. Notes for this election

Elected board members generally serve 3-year terms. Following is the slate of candidates standing for this election:

<u>Board Seat Category</u>	<u>Eligible Candidate(s)</u>
Community Member (3-year term):	<b>Jenna Oakley</b>
Parent Member (3-year term):	<b>Gina Rippl</b>
Parent Member (2-year term):	<b>Jessica Hietala</b>

# Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School

## Board Candidate Profile

### Jenna Oakley – Community Member

#### **Why are you interested in serving on the Board of Directors?**

I believe all children deserve advocacy and people who are willing to stand up for their best interests. I hope to help shape the Cornerstone community to continue to be beneficial to the children and families they serve while navigating changing societal and political climates.

#### **What role might you play in advancing the mission of the school?**

Given my background and extensive experience working with children, I believe I would help advance the mission of Cornerstone by bringing an understanding of the mental health concerns children face these days. How children born and raised during covid are learning differently, how social norms have changed for older children who may have access to social media platforms, and how parents and educators can help support learning responsibility to self and others through education.

#### **What areas of expertise would you bring to the Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School Board?**

I have over 20 years of experience in Children's Mental Health. I have worked extensively in the Autism community and more recently have spent almost the last decade providing trauma informed care and mental health supports to children ages 0-14. I have extensive development knowledge of both brain, emotional, and social health of children.

#### **What aspects of Cornerstone do you value the most? What role does Cornerstone's foundation as a Montessori school play?**

I love the belief and value Cornerstone holds to help children learn and grown in self-discipline and consideration of themselves and others as they grow into leaders. I feel this is even more crucial to help children develop these foundational skills when learning in this world during our political climate. Leadership will change in our world and no matter where your advocacy lies, I feel it is important for children to learn their responsibility to the whole.

#### **What is your vision for Cornerstone's future?**

I would love to continue to support the mission of Cornerstone, developing compassionate and responsible leaders. Helping children to understand and appreciate differences while holding compassion and drive for betterment of their world. I want children to understand their impact on each other, as well as the planet they live on, how we need to work together to support life, growth, and happiness.

## **Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School Board Candidate Profile**

### **Jessica Hietala – Parent Member**

#### **Why are you interested in serving on the Board of Directors?**

I feel a sense of gratitude towards Cornerstone. My daughter has thrived here, and I'm grateful that this school is in the neighborhood that I live in. I want to preserve and enhance Cornerstone for future families.

#### **What role might you play in advancing the mission of the school?**

As a parent member, I see my role as being the bridge between the board's strategic mission and the daily realities of our families. I've previously been on a PTO board where I was part of the team that revitalized the spring school event post-pandemic and built a calendar to foster connections and to honor all staff. Maybe I can bring my experience in organizing low-budget, high-impact initiatives to help the board translate our mission into actionable programs that truly support every child and family.

#### **What areas of expertise would you bring to the Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School Board?**

My background includes successfully partnering with various departments to solve complex problems. I focus on building trust, managing challenging discussions, and listening to different perspectives to develop effective solutions that benefit the entire community.

#### **What aspects of Cornerstone do you value the most? What role does Cornerstone's foundation as a Montessori school play?**

The aspect I value the most is how Cornerstone gives respect towards the child's individual development. Cornerstone's Montessori foundation supports diverse learners, ensuring that the child's holistic well-being remains the priority. This approach allows the school to meet each child exactly where they are rather than forcing them to fit a standard mold.

#### **What is your vision for Cornerstone's future?**

My vision for Cornerstone's future is to grow enrollment demand and become the sought after school for families who value curiosity and joy of learning.

# Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School

## Board Candidate Profile

### Gina Rippl – Parent Member

#### **Why are you interested in serving on the Board of Directors?**

I'm interested in serving on the board because Cornerstone has been a wonderful place for my family to thrive, and I am invested in helping the school continue to be a healthy and welcoming place for students, staff, families, and the community.

#### **What role might you play in advancing the mission of the school?**

As a fellow East-Sider, I care about our neighbors and community. I hope to continue learning from and advocating for all of the amazing people who call Cornerstone and the East-Side home.

#### **What areas of expertise would you bring to the Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School Board?**

I bring organizational, detail-oriented, and project-oriented skills from my previous work in non-profits, administration, and design.

#### **What aspects of Cornerstone do you value the most? What role does Cornerstone's foundation as a Montessori school play?**

I value the community aspect of Cornerstone - where all individuals (students, staff, and family members) are valued for their individuality and for their ability to contribute to the health of the community. Cornerstone's foundation as a Montessori school plays a role by encouraging us all to find our strengths and to put them to use.

#### **What is your vision for Cornerstone's future?**

My vision for Cornerstone's future is for the school to continue to be a safe, vibrant, and nurturing place for students and families to learn and grow together. Let us continue to support one another and build on our strengths in positive, informed, and healthy ways.