



CORNERSTONE

MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Board of Directors Election
Voting Guide
2023

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 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 8, 2023 beginning at 8:00 am until May 15, 2023 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 16 at 5:30 pm. All parents, faculty, and staff are encouraged to attend the Annual Meeting.

Please contact Chris Bewell at 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> |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Parent Member (3-year term): | Sarah Stocco |
| Community Member (3-year term): | Carolyn Ganz |
| Community Member (3-year term): | Jeremy Miller |
| Community Member (2-year term): | Jean Melancon |

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School Board Candidate Profile

Sarah Stocco – Parent Member

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

I have been on the Board of Directors for three years and feel I've got more work to continue. I have been a parent at Cornerstone since our son started kindergarten in 2014, and we now have two children at the school (our first went through 6th grade and is now in 8th). We have all had a positive experience here overall, and I've often felt I'd like to be more involved in supporting students, guides, administration, and families, and as a former teacher, I think I have a good sense of how a board can help advance the community voice in fulfilling the mission of the school.

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

I feel I can be a strong advocate for both guides and parents in tackling some of the challenges that inevitably arise in a community of learners. Cornerstone's mission of public Montessori should continue to grow and adapt in response to the families Cornerstone serves. This includes adhering to Montessori philosophy while ensuring culturally sustaining practices meet the needs of all children. I aim to be someone who is approachable and open to conversation, in particular to parents who are not able to commit time and still wish to have a voice in the direction of the school at the board level.

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

I have already been on the board for three years, almost all of which was during a global pandemic. While most of our energies as a board were spent trying to support guides and administration during an unprecedented time, I have also spent a lot of energy trying to advance the goals outlined in our strategic plan. In particular, I have been working hard to advance our commitment to equity, and feel that my three years of experience with those efforts will benefit our next steps. In addition, as a former teacher, I have an intimate understanding of the workings of a school and understand well the needs of families, students, and staff, and the balance that is needed in order to reach a harmonious environment that works for all community members. I also have an outdoor education background, and strongly believe in the value of students moving their bodies within and outside of the classroom. I am empathic and a good listener. And, as someone who grew a very successful, flourishing garden classroom from an abandoned blacktop at my former school, I am also an activator of new and exciting ideas.

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

One of Cornerstone's strengths is the idea that each child is valued and seen for who they are. I believe Montessori's central philosophy of child-centered, developmentally appropriate pedagogy based on what science tells us about brain and child development encourages practices that foster what we know in our guts about what children deserve, want, and need: to be seen, heard, and known. Building a strong foundation of independence, discovery, and innate desire for knowledge and understanding means that instead of being driven by standards, Cornerstone is driven by loving and understanding children. As a result of this care, the potential for deep, meaningful learning occurs, almost as a happy byproduct (even though we know lessons and guiding through learning are done with the utmost care, preparation, and skill).

What is your vision for Cornerstone's future?

I think Cornerstone's foundation of Montessori philosophy is well established and strong, and I would like to see an expanded focus on culturally sustaining practices explicitly stated and integrated into the way the board functions, the administration is run, the guides and support staff are supported, and the way families feel supported in the school. Being as we are all swimming in the same societal waters, an increased focus on structural racism, especially in education, can only help our community to increase and strengthen Cornerstone's mission of "serving children from culturally and economically diverse backgrounds." One way we can do that is to provide coaching in culturally sustaining pedagogy and equity for the entire community. I believe Cornerstone is already a leader in showing a different way of educating children, a way that is driven by and centered on child development and brain science rather than driven by standards and standardized tests. I'd love to see Cornerstone also be a leader in equity, inclusion, and culturally sustaining practices.

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School Board Candidate Profile

Carolyn Ganz – Community Member

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

At a 30,000-foot level, I place a very high value on education in general, so I am highly motivated to do whatever I can to further public educational opportunities for both children and adults. At a community level, being a Board Member gives me an opportunity not only to further my own value of promoting education, but also to learn from others: Which processes have been successful and which have not been? What are the hurdles we face in finding the right process for each child when everyone learns differently? How can we best develop a public school that works for this community?

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

I hope that I would be able to introduce others to CMES to see the amazing things happening here! The school's mission can't be accomplished without a strong foundation created by parents, teachers, Board Members and the community. Being able to support the structural aspects of the school - financial, physical and human – is important for a Board Member in building and protecting this foundation.

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

My background is in the area of public finance, and I have been involved as a consultant in financing both large and small capital projects for cities and schools. I have most recently worked in the area of personal financial planning and investing, and I think that knowing how to think about budgets, financial statements and long-range planning is something I can bring to the Board. I also have a Master's Degree in Business Administration with an emphasis in public administration.

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

Cornerstone's small size and placement in such a natural setting seem perfect for learning and exploring, and our students are amazing! I believe that the only way to improve our educational outcomes is to keep trying different approaches. Montessori is a well-tested pedagogy and I am happy that Cornerstone can provide that option. Educational processes cannot be one size fits all. I managed perfectly well in my High School graduating class of 800+ students, but many other students did not. When parents, teachers and the community can come together to offer public education choices for their kids, we ALL benefit.

What is your vision for Cornerstone's future?

I would like to see continued recognition of Cornerstone's role in nurturing children to reach their highest potential to be socially responsible citizens who are both confident and inquisitive in dealing with a multi-cultural community and world. I would like to see us attract more students from our immediate neighborhood. Our current task forces working with Equity and Inclusion and Expansion both provide Cornerstone with tremendous opportunities to influence the lives of not only the attending children but the entire community. I truly value the chance to be part of that success.

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School Board Candidate Profile

Jeremy Miller – Community Member

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

I want to have an impact on children and the community at large and see this opportunity as a way to serve outside of myself. I am also interested in the Montessori experience and believe CMES is leading the area in the way it engages with students. My tour of the school was eye-opening to see the impact the environment has on children and their growth as humans. I'm humbled to be considered for nomination to the Board.

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

I would like to help the school fulfill its mission through ensuring sound financial footing that will support the high-impact Montessori programs at the school. I also want to be part of making sound strategic decisions as the school moves into the future.

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

I am a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and finance consultant at a CPA firm in the St. Paul community. I will bring my financial knowledge and expertise to the board. I'd also like to assist with fundraising to the extent needed and open to other areas as well.

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

I value the diversity of the school and the way that it empowers students to make positive decisions that will impact the trajectory of their life post-elementary school. I believe the habits and priorities taught in the Montessori setting equip kids to have the personal responsibility required for a successful life.

What is your vision for Cornerstone's future?

My vision is for Cornerstone to be a model Montessori school for other schools across the Midwest and show how the Montessori education uniquely equips students in a positive direction.

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School Board Candidate Profile

Jean Melancon – Community Member

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

I'd be honored to continue serving on CMES's board to continue providing families a Montessori experience on St. Paul's east side. My husband and I have witnessed how the Montessori method enabled our two children to independently develop to their potential by attending Montessori schools from age 3 through 8th grade. I believe in CMES's mission and am grateful for the dedicated staff and their ability to provide a unique learning opportunity for children and their families. I receive immense satisfaction in utilizing my professional background on the board.

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

Ensure that CMES's four strategic plan areas of access, community, equity, and sustainability are thoroughly researched and implemented with input from families, teachers, staff, and knowledge experts. I also view my role as an advocate for CMES including representing our school on the east side and seeking opportunities to interface with community organizations.

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

As an ex-officio Board Chair of Oak Hill Montessori's Board of Trustees, I focused on growing its board to be more strategically focused. I learned how good boards function with guidance from their Head of School, external consultants and by researching and adapting good board practices. I presided over Oak Hill's Parent Association and led the effort to formalize the association for parent volunteers to work with the school on community-related events. I've also provided consulting expertise to MN charter and private schools. My professional background includes developing software applications for international airline carriers, business consulting in program management, process improvement, and directing Six Sigma efforts at a Fortune 100 company.

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

I value CMES's chosen location on St. Paul's east side, its mission, and its ability to provide a Montessori experience for the children and to provide families the opportunity to learn about practices that can be incorporated into home life. CMES is a beacon for other schools to emulate, aiming to make a Montessori experience available to more children within and beyond the Twin Cities.

What is your vision for Cornerstone's future?

To build upon all the good work of former board members and, as a community member, to bring a non-parent perspective for sustaining the school while implementing the strategic plan. I also envision CMES maintaining its role as a model for other emerging Montessori charter schools.