



CORNERSTONE

MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Board of Directors Election
Voting Guide
2024

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 13, 2024 beginning at 8:00 am until May 20, 2024 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 21 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):	Rachel Droogsma
Community Member (3-year term):	Julaine Roffers-Agarwal
Community Member (2-year term):	Rohan Chougule

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School Board Candidate Profile

Rachel Droogsma – Parent Member

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

I believe it's important to volunteer my time to institutions that are making a positive difference in my community. Cornerstone positively impacts the east side of Saint Paul, the community I live in, by making a Montessori education accessible to children from diverse backgrounds. I'd like to use my knowledge and skills to further that impact.

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

If elected to serve on the board, I would help advance Cornerstone's mission by connecting the school with community partners, centering the experiences of marginalized groups in decision making, and providing parents' perspectives by being an open and listening ear to Cornerstone families.

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

My work in higher education, first as a Communication Studies faculty member and now as staff in the field of community-engaged learning, reflects the skill set I bring to the board. Specifically, I bring my skills as a communicator and listener in particular, my knowledge of engaged/experiential learning practices, my experience teaching undergraduate and graduate level diversity courses, and my connections to non-profit organizations in the Twin Cities.

Outside of higher education, I served as a substitute teacher at Cornerstone for two years, so I am also well acquainted with the school and its environments. And, I served on the board of Prescott Elementary School's Parent Teacher Organization (in Lincoln, Nebraska) for five years.

Last but not least, I am a parent to two children, ages 9 and 15, and bring my experience as a parent of a Cornerstone student, an adoptive parent, and parent of a special needs child with me to the board.

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

I value Cornerstone's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. I believe that Cornerstone's foundation as a Montessori school, rooted in the individuality of each child, forms a firm foundation for Cornerstone to be the inclusive community it is. At Cornerstone, each child is accepted for exactly who they are and can learn in the ways that suit them best as they explore the world around them.

What is your vision for Cornerstone's future?

I envision Cornerstone continuing to be a school that supports both academic and social-emotional learning for all of its students, and I'd like to see the school strengthen family involvement and connections to community organizations.

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School

Board Candidate Profile

Julaine Roffers-Agarwal – Community Member

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

I have served on the CMES Board of Directors for the past six years as a parent Board member and would like to continue my work on the Board as a Community member. I have also served as the Chair of the Board for the last two years and am committed to continuing in this role. My son, Rajan, is a current sixth year student in Forest and I really value the growth and development he has had while attending CMES. I was a Montessori child and would like to help CMES implement, strengthen, and expand its Montessori program to help empower children the way I was supported and nurtured.

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

During my time on the board, I have continued to keep the mission of CMES as the underlying motivation for the decisions we make as a Board. This includes ensuring that the budget, policies, and board decisions are grounded in the CMES mission. In particular, I have served as the Governance Committee chair for almost six years and the Board chair for two and made sure to craft and update policies and guide Board activities with the mission as our guiding principle.

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

I have lived on St Paul's East Side for almost 22 years and so I am invested in the success and growth of children and families from the East Side and surrounding areas. In addition, I am a professional scientist and will continue using my critical thinking, observation, and evaluation skills to consider board approaches, projects, and the budget.

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

As a current (soon to be former) CMES parent and East Side resident, I most value the emphasis that a Montessori program places on meeting each child where they are developmentally and developing the whole child. In addition, the staff works hard to incorporate new approaches into the Montessori pedagogy in order to best support our children and families.

What is your vision for Cornerstone's future?

I would like Cornerstone to continue to offer a high-quality Montessori program to children from the East Side of St Paul and beyond while incorporating new techniques and approaches. I also want to help CMES grow and expand its programs in a responsible manner while making sure that we are reaching and supporting as many children as possible.

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School

Board Candidate Profile

Rohan Chougule – Community Member

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

I attended Montessori during my school days and I value Montessori's learning approach. I support the role of education in our life's journey and am interested in contributing to learning and development of our next generation.

Serving as the board of director will support my personal goal of contributing and giving back to the society.

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

Support program enhancement & academic excellence, equitable & inclusive learning environment, foster community engagement, Board governance best practices, long term financial sustainability.

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

Current CMES board member (joined July 2023), 15+ years of professional experience in strategy & finance, Board governance, family background in teaching and education systems.

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

Montessori pedagogy, school's mission & vision, highly qualified school teachers and support staff, unique learning approach focusing on holistic curriculum.

What is your vision for Cornerstone's future?

Continue to offer authentic, high-quality Montessori education to children. Offer an environment which fosters collaboration and focuses on the individual child and their strengths and weaknesses in a way that frees the child to learn and grow. Provide high quality indoor and outdoor enrichment. Support the school teachers and staff, develop a strong connection with the neighborhood and St Paul community.