



## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS HANDBOOK AND MEMBER AGREEMENT**

### **Mission Statement**

Dedication to the Conscious Evolution of the Whole Child – Mountain Song Community School (“MSCS” or “School”) is a community of families and educators dedicated to the conscious evolution of the whole child utilizing developmentally appropriate holistic education that nurtures body, mind and heart. Our aim is to bring forth healthy, confident, free-thinking, self-directed children who are passionately engaged with their education and empowered to contribute positively to the world.

### **Vision Statement**

MSCS is an educational community committed to the healthy growth and development of the whole child. Health includes the physical, emotional, and social realms. Through a curriculum inspired by Waldorf methods, our teachers nurture the imagination in the early years, building a foundation for abstract thinking, gradually and appropriately challenging the intellect throughout the grades. Equal emphasis is placed on a solid academic program, artistic expression, social development and attention to the inner life and natural rhythms of the child.

MSCS is committed to creating a healthy community which reflects and supports our common values. Children develop social responsibility and feel a greater sense of significance in a small, supportive environment which promotes close long-term relationships with classmates and teachers. In an atmosphere of respectful clear communication, cooperation and parent participation, children flourish and grow to be healthy, capable, contributing human beings. Teaching children to care for and respect the earth encourages global responsibility and promotes environmentally conscious living. The celebration of seasonal festivals is vital as children joyously experience the earth’s natural cycles. By reducing or eliminating exposure to electronic media and encouraging a cooperative rather than a competitive milieu, a child’s inherent creative and intellectual abilities unfold naturally. Teaching is presented to children in a way which fills both teacher and student with wonder, reverence and enthusiasm.

### **Policy Statement and Decision Making**

Colorado Charter School Institute (“CSI”) has granted a charter to MSCS. The Board of Directors of the school oversees this charter. All decisions by the Board of Directors and the School Director shall be made within the parameters and uphold the principles of the vision and mission statements. **Decisions shall be made first considering the vision and mission statements**

and then considering the stakeholders (parents and their students), always keeping in mind that parents should have a meaningful voice in their child's education.

### **Qualifications**

To be qualified to serve on the School's Board, each board member must agree to:

- Be familiar with the MSCS Charter School Application and Contract,
- Support the educational philosophy and administrative structure of the School,
- Read *Understanding Waldorf Education* by Jack Petrash and any additional materials that the Board deems appropriate,
- Follow parliamentary procedures, using *Robert's Rules of Order* as a reference, in Board related meetings,
- Complete, within ten (10) months of joining the Board, a comprehensive review of charter school board rules and practices which includes (1) reading CDE's *Charter School Governing Board Training Handbook* and (2) completing the Online Charter School Governing Board Training Modules (<http://onlinelearning.enetcolorado.org/login/>),
- Demonstrate (quarterly) proficiency in the School's Waldorf inspired program, best practices in non-profit charter school governance, and understanding of academic achievement data. (This may include a schedule of training opportunities provided to each member with a requirement of participation in one per quarter. Training opportunities may include webinars, bringing in consultants, Colorado Department of Education and Colorado League of Charter Schools' conferences/meetings, attending Friday teacher development days, Waldorf conferences/lectures, etc.),
- Participate in yearly self-evaluations and board retreat,
- Read and abide by MSCS' Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws and Conflict of Interest and Anti-Nepotism policies, and
- Read and sign the Board Handbook and Agreement.

Parents of current students and members of the community at large may serve on the Board. Prior board experience is helpful but not required. The School Director and the College of Teachers Chairs shall be non-voting *ex-officio* members of the Board. Subject thereto, no faculty or other staff member may be a candidate or serve on the Board due to the inherent conflict of interest in having an employee of the School on the Board of Directors.

A high value for professionalism and the success of the School is mandatory. Motivation for serving on the Board of Directors shall be to help facilitate the educational success of students.

## **Governance**

MSCS is an entity separate from the school district in the area of governance. This unique characteristic of charters shall be guarded by each board member.

MSCS shall be governed by a Board of Directors. The School Director of MSCS shall answer directly to the Board and serve at the pleasure of the Board. The Board of Directors shall govern the School by establishing the policies and general direction of the School and providing financial oversight while the School Director and School personnel (as deemed necessary and hired by the School Director) shall manage the School by implementing the policies and day to day operation of the School.

Board members will not question any decision made by the School Director in any public arena. If a Board member questions a decision, he/she shall immediately take that concern or disagreement to the School Director in a confidential and diplomatic format. Likewise, the School Director shall agree to the same commitment. Respect for each other shall remain constant.

## **Behavioral Expectations**

Board members shall exemplify integrity, honesty and respect. Commitment to the vision of MSCS and the charter school movement shall be top priority for any board member. Board members shall have a firm belief in the philosophical and pedagogical approach of Waldorf education as reflected in the Mission and Vision of MSCS and shall provide sustained guidance and oversight to the School Director for a successful and effective operation of the School. Board members shall actively pursue deepening their knowledge of Waldorf methods, charter school development and education reform through suggested readings, workshops, and/or conferences.

A diversity of opinions and solutions are necessary for the effective governance of MSCS; and, a professional demeanor is expected at all board meetings. Board members shall respect and listen to ideas being presented by other board members. Issues being discussed shall not be personalized and directed toward any other board member, staff member, parent or anyone else. Discernment should be used in interpersonal relationships and communications. Confidentiality is expected in all situations.

Board members shall demonstrate initiative in remaining informed about the School's activities and progress through regular attendance at Board meetings and other planned meetings and through reading School reports and recommended publications. Board members shall fulfill their responsibilities on the board, board committees or subcommittees to their fullest capability.

All board members should attend at least two Parent Council meetings per year to show support and encouragement for that vital aspect of the School. All Board members are required to attend a yearly board conference during which the goals of the Board are defined, a Board self-evaluation critiqued and other pertinent topics are discussed. Board members commit to visiting the school periodically to have a feel for the School. They may visit classrooms, talk with the staff and become familiar with current school concerns.

Each board member shall commit to supporting the School thru fundraising efforts and should be the School's best public relations representatives.

A board member is prohibited from using his/her position of authority while acting in a parent or volunteer role at the School. Board members shall foster good relationships with the School Director and staff on a personal level. With humility, each board member will serve the best interests of the School.

When receiving criticisms from parents or other interested parties about staff or other board members, the board member shall direct the speaker to the board member/staff member which the situation involves. Board members will never speak negatively about staff or other board members to the school community or parties outside the school community.

Any board member finding him/herself involved in an irreconcilable conflict shall put the mission and vision of the School first and foremost or resign from the Board if unable to do so.

Board members shall abide by the Open Meetings Law [C.R.S. 24-6-401 through 402]. The Open Meetings Law states that anyone discussing Board business, policy, actions, resolutions, etc. amongst 3 or more board members, except at meetings for which notice has been properly posted at least 24 hours prior to the meeting, is illegal. "Meeting" with another board member is defined as communication through person, telephone, or any other means. Confidentiality law is also outlined in this section of the statute. Personnel matters, individual students, and negotiations are confidential by law and may be conducted in executive session.

### **Attendance at Meetings**

Board members are expected to attend all meetings of the Board of Directors unless excused. Missing more than two consecutive Board meetings without prior approval from the President or at least two other board members shall be grounds for removal from the Board. Unexcused absences from one-third of the Board meetings in any one year shall also be grounds for removal of a board member. As outlined in the Bylaws, board members present by telephone or video conference shall be deemed present in person for all purposes provided such members can simultaneously hear and speak to all other persons present. All board meetings shall be governed by means of parliamentary procedures, using Robert's Rules of Order as a reference.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The Conflict of Interest Policy outlines the procedures if a potential conflict due to outside interests arises. If any person who is a director, officer, executive, or administrator of

MSCS is aware that the School is about to make a grant to or otherwise enter into any transaction directly or indirectly with such person, any member of that person's family, or any entity in which that person has any legal, equitable or fiduciary interest or position, including, without limitation, as a director, officer, shareholder, partner, beneficiary or trustee, such person shall: (a) promptly inform those charged with approving the transaction on behalf of the School of such person's interest or position; (b) disclose any material facts within such person's knowledge that bear on the advisability of such transaction from the standpoint of the School; (c) thereafter recuse him/herself from further deliberations; and (d) not be entitled to vote on the decision to enter into such transaction. If such person's recusal destroys quorum, then the Board may not act upon that topic at that time.

## **Grievances**

When parents or other parties approach a board member with a grievance about School personnel or other board member, the board member shall redirect the aggrieved party to the MSCS Grievance Process provided in the Employee and Family Handbooks as well as this Handbook. Board members shall never speak negatively about School personnel or other board members to the School community or parties outside the School community.

Grievances shall be resolved by those between whom it exists. Board members will commit to resolving grievances directly with each other or with the appropriate school personnel and not share the grievance with anyone outside of the grievance (except as necessary to follow MSCS' approved Grievance Process) including, but not limited to, other parents, other school personnel, or the media.

## **Grievance Procedures**

MSCS strives to be proactive in promoting positive working relationships between all members of the School's community including staff members, administration, the Board, students, family members and visitors.

The following policies apply to grievances of any type that may include but are not limited to: Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) violations; harassment claims; conflict with staff members, students, family members, and/or visitors, etc. The grievance procedures detail how adult members of the School community (all faculty, family members, administrators, Board members) are expected to express grievances about other members of the community.

The administration and Board are committed to addressing and resolving conflict in a timely manner while following the fewest steps of the procedures below. However, if the conflict is not resolved at the lowest faculty or administrative level, guidelines below provide a process for resolving the conflict.

The steps below must be followed in order to ensure that grievances are properly addressed and resolved:

1. Address issues with those directly involved – The grievant brings the situation or concern to the attention of those directly involved. Should the grievant fail to begin the process at the lowest possible level and instead (for example) go directly to a board member with a concern about the School Director, the board member will re-direct the grievant to the School Director.

2. Facilitate resolution with the assistance of the School Director or designee – If satisfactory resolution is not realized after direct conversation between the conflicted parties, the situation must be brought to the attention of the School Director or designee within ten (10) days of the initial conversation between the conflicted parties. The School Director or designee and the conflicted parties will address the situation, facilitate communication, and develop goals for conflict resolution. The School Director or designee will monitor the process until resolution is realized or until an impasse is reached. If the concern is regarding the School Director, then the President of the Board or a designee will facilitate the complaint at this level.

3. Prepare a written grievance for the School Director or designee – If the grievant is not satisfied with the response received via the first two steps, the grievant shall prepare a formal written grievance to the School Director or designee. The grievance must:

- a) describe the incident, decision or practice that gave rise to the complaint;
- b) if possible, cite the contract, policy or procedure that has been violated and/or rationale for concern;
- c) describe what conflict resolution strategies were attempted via steps one and two; and
- d) explain what corrective action is being requested.

Upon receipt of the written grievance, the School Director or designee will address the situation as appropriate. It is the responsibility of the School Director or designee to manage the ultimate resolution of conflicts among faculty, staff, students and family members except in situations that pertain to the School Director himself/herself or to the School Director's execution of a school-wide policy or procedure.

4. Provide written grievance to the Board of Directors – The grievant may request that the matter be brought to the attention of the Board only if the matter has not been satisfactorily resolved upon completion of the first three steps of the grievance process. Upon request by the grievant, the School Director will forward the written grievance to the President of the Board at least one week prior to the next scheduled Board meeting. The President or designee will review the above process and ensure that the proper steps were taken before adding the issue to a Board meeting agenda. While the Board will hear complaints during the public comment period of a board meeting, formal grievances shall not be brought to the Board as a matter of public comments as this does not give the Board sufficient time to consider the issue and address it through the grievance process. The Board will not hear grievances that do not follow the grievance process.

The final forum for conflict resolution, after a grievant has followed the steps outlined above, will be at the level of the Board of Directors.

## **Materials**

The School shall provide each Board member with an *electronic copy* of MSCS’:

1. Charter Application
2. Charter Contract with CSI
3. Articles of Incorporation
4. Bylaws
5. Conflict of Interest Policy
6. Anti-Nepotism Policy

The School shall also provide each Board member with a fully executed copy of this Board of Directors Handbook and Member Agreement. It is understood that these documents shall remain the property of MSCS. Previous Board meeting minutes with Board packet supplements may be reviewed in the MSCS office. The School may provide each Board member a MSCS email account for school business use. If a MSCS email account is issued, each Board member shall use their MSCS email account to communicate regarding board matters. Finally, each board member shall retain all electronic communication for the length of their term or three (3) years whichever is greater.

## **Board of Director Responsibilities**

The MSCS Board of Directors shall:

1. Implement the School’s mission and vision statements.
2. Establish policies in accordance with the school’s mission, vision, goals and educational program for the School Director’s operation of the School and ensuring that the Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, the MSCS charter school contract, and other contracts or agreements with Colorado Charter School Institute (“CSI”) are being followed.
3. Select and evaluate the School Director.
4. Provide proper financial oversight and assist in developing the annual budget
5. Ensure adequate resources are provided for the School to fulfill its mission and its short-term and long-term goals.
6. Ensure legal and ethical integrity and maintain accountability.
7. Be responsible for final accountability for the School’s academic success, organizational viability and accordance with the terms of the contract with its authorizer.
8. Recruit and orient new directors, assess Board performance and assure ongoing board member training and development.
9. Establish necessary working committees and ensuring that each board member is actively involved in appropriate committee assignments. Each board member is expected to serve actively on at least one such committee.
10. Perform periodic evaluations of MSCS, taking into consideration the School’s philosophy and goals as stated in the vision and mission statements.

11. Conduct a written annual evaluation of the performance of the School Director and establish his/her performance goals for the following year.
12. Conduct a written annual self-evaluation, including consideration of whether the Board and its committees are independently knowledgeable concerning School matters or are relying too heavily upon the School Director and other School personnel for guidance in establishing and maintaining policies.
13. Keep full and accurate minutes of Board meetings.
14. Maintain a policy repository so that governing decisions made over a period of years may be readily available to subsequent Board members and School directors.
15. Participate in MSCS' annual fundraising effort.
16. Develop and maintain a communication link to the community.

**It is important to remember that authority rests in the collective Board and that no board member has individual authority.**

BY SIGNING BELOW, EACH BOARD MEMBER AGREES TO UPHOLD THE TERMS OF THIS AGREEMENT AND ABIDE BY THE PRINCIPLES ESTABLISHED IN THIS HANDBOOK, THE BYLAWS, THE ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION AND ALL LAWS AND POLICIES APPLYING TO THE SCHOOL.

Signed, this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_