

[www.tmaonline.org](http://www.tmaonline.org)

# TMA

THE MONTESSORI ACADEMY  
of Arlington

## THE TMA COMMUNITY





# CORPORATE STRUCTURE

The Montessori Academy is chartered as a non-profit corporation in the State of Texas and governed by a set of [Bylaws](#). All parents with currently enrolled children are automatically members of the corporation. TMA teachers, parents, and interested members all have voting power according to [Bylaw](#) specification. The members of the corporation elect a Board of Trustees which formulates general policies. The Board of Trustees hires the Head of School. The Head is charged with overseeing the effective administration of all aspects of the school's operation, including faculty, staff, and student selection, evaluation, and dismissal. The Head is also responsible for conveying the mission of TMA to the staff, for the professional quality and behavior of the staff, and expanding leadership capacity within the staff.

Parents may serve on the Board of Trustees and on school committees. Parent participation in organizing various fundraising efforts during the school year is especially important. Opportunities are also provided for parents to assist the teaching staff. Parents are expected to attend parent development opportunities each semester to increase their understanding and appreciation of the Montessori Method and its application in our classrooms. Parents are also expected to attend orientations and meetings regarding the business of the corporation. Parents may attend open Board meetings if they desire.

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT

From its inception, The Montessori Academy has been organized to (i) maximize opportunities for parent input into school policies, (ii) stimulate parent interest, and (iii) to reduce operating costs and thus to lower school fees. Since all parents share in these benefits, all are expected to contribute time, services, and/or money to support school projects. As a result, parent involvement is mandatory as stated on the Enrollment Contract. However, parents are strongly encouraged to go beyond their contractual commitment of 10 hours and become as involved as their time allows. Ultimately, the strength of TMA depends on parents and school staff actively and collaboratively working together to make TMA the finest learning environment for all of its children. You can make a difference. Find your area of interest and become involved. If you need help connecting, contact another parent, a staff member, or Board member; we would be happy to help you identify your niche.

# COMMUNITY MEMBERSHIP DEFINED

## History

The founders established a private not-for-profit school in 1981 as a parent cooperative to provide high quality education at a reasonable price for preschool and elementary students. The inaugural Bylaws defined who could be a community member: parents of students enrolled in the school, teachers, and staff employed by the school, and any interested party who applied for membership (annual fee required) and whose application was accepted by a majority vote of the Board of Trustees.

## Open Membership

As opposed to many private schools, the founders wanted the affairs of the school to be open to the membership's review. This is not common, but it was a foundational philosophy on which the TMA was built. Any community member could attend TMA's regular Board meetings, read the minutes of said meetings, and as recognized by the Board Chairperson have input to agenda topics during meetings.

## Governance

[Bylaws](#) specified that the membership of TMA would authorize TMA's Board of Trustees to conduct the school's business as a representative governing body. The membership of TMA votes to place their majority elected candidates on the school's Board for three-year terms. The sitting Board (1) discusses and determines school policies, (2) establishes tuition rates/fees, (3) oversees the school's budget, (4) assures federal, state, and local governance/regulatory compliance, and (5) hires the Head of the School.

## Representation

The [Bylaws](#) also stipulate that the Board of Trustees may present an issue to the membership of the corporation for consideration and vote. In such instances, the majority vote of the corporation's members determines the fate of the issue. If the issue is a change to the [Bylaws](#), an amendment must be published 10 days prior to convening a meeting at which a two-thirds vote of those attending is required for passage.

What does being a TMA corporation member mean? It means having a representative voice via those elected to the Board of Trustees, and having a voice to present ideas and opinions about the school's governance and policies.

### **Parent Responsibilities**

- Fulfill Parent-School Partnership Agreement
- Become knowledgeable of Montessori philosophy
- Complete all forms in a timely manner and keep contact information current throughout the year
- Sign and fulfill conditions of the Enrollment Contract
- Complete membership requirements per contract and log hours in ParentsWeb
- Attend the Annual Meeting, Parent Development Opportunity classes, Parent/Teacher Conferences, and orientations
- Advise staff of changes in the home
- Advise office of any changes in enrollment status
- Participate in the Annual Fund and other fundraising events conducted throughout the year
- Follow the chain of command in problem solving: Teacher, Program Administrator, Head of School, Board of Trustees
- Use ParentsWeb Membership Directory for school business only and not for solicitation of personal business

### **Fundraising**

Fundraising at TMA is quite different from other schools. Our mission is to *provide quality Montessori education to children of various economic, ethnic, and intellectual backgrounds in a supportive "parent-teacher-child" environment*. Unless a fundraising activity directly supports this mission, any funds raised are considered unrelated business income. Taxes are imposed on any amount of unrelated business income over \$1,000; exceeding this amount would require us to file an additional tax return. As a non-profit, we are regulated by 4 agencies, one of which allows fundraising without incurring taxes on 2 days each year. Ongoing fundraisers and those that can be seen as competing with taxable businesses would require us to pay taxes and file an additional tax return. Because of these tax and regulatory consequences, we limit fundraising to the 2 days provided by the regulatory agency, one in the fall and one in the spring.

# TMA COMMITTEES

There are a number of committees available for parent involvement including special event committees that plan our annual fall and spring fundraising events.

## Committee Guidelines

### Goals

- Set clear and viable goals for the year at the first meeting (September). Include these goals in all requests and reports to the Board of Trustees.
- Discuss and explain how your goals align with the strategic goals of the school.

### Organization/Meetings

- Establish a regular schedule of meetings early in the academic year.
- Establish clear lines of communication between members and chair(s).
- Ensure clear distinction between school committees (reporting to Board of Trustees) and operations (day-to-day operations supervised by the Head of School). All school committee chairs report questions/concerns/recommendations to the Board. Ensure that all proposals are approved through proper channels: Event Committee —> Director of Marketing and Admissions —> Head of School —> Board of Trustees.
- For a request to be reviewed by the Board of Trustees, it must be submitted through proper channels (see above) at least 5 working days before a regularly scheduled Board meeting.
- For Event Committees, an itemized budget for the event must be approved by the Board of Trustees before requests for school funding are made and contracts for services, goods, transportation, etc., are signed.
- Involve other members of the school community by requesting help and publicizing event/projects.
- Hold a final, end of year meeting to evaluate progress made on goals and to make recommendations to the following year's committee.
- A final report is required to be submitted to the Board of Trustees at the next scheduled Board meeting. Event committees have 30 days after the event to prepare the report.
- All school committees must adhere to the TMA Branding Guidelines. Contact the Director of Marketing and Admissions for more information.

## Financial

- No committee chair or member may sign contracts for services, goods, transportation, etc., without notification and approval of the Head of School, or in the Head's absence, the Board of Trustees.
- Ensure all costs, including materials, copier paper, postage, photocopies, etc., are included in the budget. These costs must be handled by the committee and will not be provided by the school. Budget requests are submitted to the Board of Trustees. A copier code will be provided by office staff and is to be used when making photocopies for committee work; cost will be assessed at \$0.10/copy.
- A receipt must be turned in, along with the carbonless copy of the check, for all school checks written. A canceled check or credit card statement is not sufficient since it does not reflect itemization or tax paid. A completed W-9 form (including address and social security number) must also be submitted to the school Accountant for each individual that TMA pays for a service (caterer, bartender, entertainer, etc.).
- If committee members purchase items for use at school functions, the school does not reimburse the tax since we are non-profit. There is a [Sales Tax Exemption form](#) with our tax ID number which can be presented to store merchants to avoid paying tax.
- To receive a reimbursement, a [Reimbursement Form](#) with the receipt attached, must be completed and submitted to the school Accountant.
- All carbonless copies of checks, written receipts, and requests for reimbursements must be submitted to the school Accountant in a timely manner, no later than one to two weeks after the event.
- All collection of funds raised will be the sole responsibility of the committee chair; TMA staff will not work on the collection of funds.
- All funds are to be collected and delivered to the school Accountant the first business day following the event.
- Fair Market Value (FMV) is to be listed on all auction items (including silent auction items) BEFORE the auction begins. A spreadsheet must be submitted to the school Accountant after the event stating: item, FMV, sale price, name and address of purchaser, and manner of payment (cash/check with check number).

### Correspondence

- Correspondence to the whole community must be approved by the Director of Marketing and Admissions.
- The Head of School must first approve any correspondence to TMA staff or requests for involvement of TMA staff in committee activities.

### Use of Office Staff

- Remember that office staff is not to be used by committees for committee tasks, such as making copies, sending emails, etc.
- The Director of Marketing and Admissions may include announcements in the TMA Connection.

### Advertisements and Sponsors

- A copy of all advertisements, all solicitations for donated items, all donation sheets, and other relevant materials must be submitted to the school Accountant; as well as a list of all paid sponsors and the amount of their donation.
- Paid sponsors may be recognized The use of promotional logos or slogans that are an established part of the sponsor's identity are not considered advertising and may be used.

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities for parent involvement, both at school and at home, can be found on the [Community Service Opportunities](#) page online. Additionally, parents can speak with classroom teachers or front office staff, view the Community Board near the front office, and read the TMA Connection. There are many areas in which parents may be involved including:

1. Member of the Board of Trustees (fulfills 10 hours per school year requirement);
2. Chair a committee (fulfills 10 hours per school year requirement);
3. Driving and accompanying classes on field trips;
4. Participating in special lessons for children;
5. Reading to children or being read to by children;
6. Making materials for classrooms under the direction of a teacher;
7. Participating in school-wide workdays to maintain the environment of the school;

8. Providing baked goods for special events (festivals, staff birthdays, staff appreciation);
9. Substituting for teachers in the classroom;
10. Posting online reviews of the school on sites such as [Google](#), [Great Schools!](#), [Private School Review](#), [Facebook](#), [Yelp!](#), and [Niche](#); and
11. Maintaining materials, furniture, and playground equipment.

Not only will your children benefit by your interest and participation in their school, faculty will appreciate your involvement. A background check is required of all volunteers who come into contact with students.

All hours must be logged in [ParentsWeb](#). Directions can be found at the bottom of the [Community Service Opportunities](#) page. TMA families are responsible for logging their own hours.

If you are highly involved in another non-profit organization, we may consider transferring those hours on a case by case basis. Modeling service beyond ourselves is the important aspect of this policy, rather than service to the TMA community.

## COMMUNITY SERVICE POLICY

The volunteer application process is in place with the goal of providing the safest environment for all of our students, staff, and volunteers. TMA strongly encourages parents and relatives of enrolled students to become regular volunteers.

If you are interested in volunteering at TMA as a substitute teacher, classroom volunteer, field trip driver/chaperone, or in any other capacity, please complete a [Volunteer Application](#) form and return it to the front office.

All individuals applying to be a volunteer at TMA must agree to a national criminal history records background check. The requested information regarding gender, ethnicity, social security number, and date of birth is necessary for processing and is kept strictly confidential.

TMA can utilize only those volunteers who are on the current list of approved volunteers. Volunteers will be placed on the approved list when a clear criminal history has been received from the agency with which TMA has contracted to complete criminal history background checks. The approval to volunteer is effective for two years from the date of approval.



If TMA receives information indicating an apparent criminal history on an applicant for anything other than a minor traffic offense, the applicant will not be approved until the applicant provides official proof that the record is clear, or until an appeal is successfully processed. Apparent criminal history includes arrests that may or may not have resulted in a criminal conviction. An appeal must be made to the officers of TMA's Board of Trustees (President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary). The appeal process will be kept strictly confidential.

An apparent criminal history would not require an appeal to the Board for permission to participate with your child in the classroom, attend class parties with your child, accompany your child on school or family field trips or volunteer at school events where you are not responsible for supervising children other than your own.

TMA's Community Service Policy is intended to be one more step toward ensuring the safety of your children. This policy is not intended to discourage parents and relatives from being volunteers and TMA remains committed to involving parents in the education of their children.

## **TMA ANNUAL MEETING**

The Annual Meeting of Members is held in September. During this meeting, Board members and school committee chairs update the school community regarding their activities. The Head of School communicates school and education information. These meetings also provide an opportunity for social interaction and serve to strengthen the school community. Child care is usually available on a reservation basis.

# BOARD OF TRUSTEES

In a corporate, not-for-profit school like TMA, the ultimate responsibility for policy-making is vested in the Board of Trustees and the authority of the Board is equivalent in this structure to that of the owner(s) in a sole proprietorship or partnership.

## **Composition of the Board**

The Board of Trustees will be composed of persons of dedication, competence, and stature who represent a diversity of talent and knowledge and who have sufficient time available to support the goals of the school. Grave problems may arise when a Board is composed entirely of parents of current students due to the difficulty of members putting aside the role of parent and accepting responsibility for the school's welfare as a whole. The TMA Board of Trustees may have a maximum of five Community Director positions. Community Trustees are defined as individuals who are not current TMA parents or staff. Community Trustees bring an external perspective to the school and its policies. Community Director positions are filled with qualified and interested individuals invited by the nominating committee to serve on the TMA Board for terms of two years.

## **Board Nomination Policy**

Nominations for the Board of Trustees are accepted throughout the year; particular areas of expertise needed include development, finance, and legal. General roles a Trustee must embrace have been identified by ISM (Independent School Management) and are outlined in the following table.

## **GOVERNOR**

In the role of Governor, the Trustee exhibits:

- Knowledge of (and ability to quote) the school mission statement;
- Knowledge of and commitment to the Board's own mission statement;
- Familiarity with Board bylaws;
- Thorough preparation for meetings;
- On-time attendance at meetings;
- Mental "presence" at, and full participation in, meetings;
- Strategic focus in the content and process of meetings; and
- Commitment to the group process, the open exchange of ideas, and the presentation of a unified voice to constituents.

## **SPONSOR**

In the role of Sponsor, the Trustee exhibits:

- Thoughtful inquiry into the financial soundness of the school's assets;
- Promptness in making personal financial contributions to school initiatives (operating, annual, capital, and/or endowment) and providing support to all development and fundraising goals;
- Understanding of the components of the strategic financial plan and their interplay; and
- Scrupulous avoidance of conflict of interest.

## **AMBASSADOR**

In the role of Ambassador, the Trustee exhibits:

- Enthusiastic public support for the school, its Head and administration, the faculty, fellow Trustees, and the Board as a whole;
- Commitment to the confidentiality of Board matters;
- Care and prudence in commenting on any Board matters in casual conversations; and
- Openness to constituent contact, but with the understanding that he/she is not a "representative" of a particular constituent group.

## **CONSULTANT**

In the role of Consultant, the Trustee exhibits:

- Generous giving of time and talent when called upon by the Board or administration. The school relies on the special training and skills the Trustee brings to the Board, especially those for which he or she was recruited;
- A willingness to keep up-to-date on best practices in independent schools;
- Contribution to the Board profiling processes; and
- Commitment to Board-level diversity as that term is defined at the school.

The Board meets only five times during the year and it is important that nominees are able to commit to attend. The Board also has a one-day retreat annually, typically on a Saturday. Regular Board meetings are scheduled in advance and the TMA Community is informed in the TMA Connection.

Interested persons need to submit a completed Board nomination form and participate in an interview with the Nominating Committee. If qualified individuals within the needed areas of expertise are identified by the Nominating Committee, then a slate will be presented to the TMA community for the election in May. For more information or to request a nomination packet, contact the [Board Secretary](#).

## **Election of Trustees**

Trustees are elected at the May meeting and take office in July. Officers of the Board (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer) for the Executive Committee are elected by the members of the Board of Trustees at the July Board meeting. The Executive Committee consists of the Officers and the Head of School.

## **Board of Trustees' Code of Ethics**

Each Board member must endorse the mission, ideals, and goals which are the foundation of The Montessori Academy to ensure an environment which stimulates learning. The school shall adhere to the basic philosophy of Maria Montessori, but remain mindful of other thinkers. The Montessori Academy views Montessori as an approach but not a pure or fixed method. Therefore, The Montessori Academy possesses its own quality and uniqueness. The central criterion for its practices shall be the needs of the children it strives to serve. A Trustee must always be mindful of these principles.

Trustees shall:

- Follow the duties of a Trustee as listed in the [Bylaws](#);
- Follow the duties outlined in assigned Board job descriptions;
- Exemplify absolute fidelity to the school's interest;
- Bring situations of conflict to resolution through the procedures designed to handle such circumstances and refrain from involvement in situations handled otherwise;
- Follow the accepted and established lines of communication in regard to the staff, parents, and communication within the Board itself;



- Respect complete confidentiality of information designated for Trustees;
- Abstain and leave the Board meeting, if asked, when an issue discussed involves the Trustee;
- Keep all Board matters pertaining to staff, children, parents, other Trustees, or other sensitive subject in the strictest confidence;
- Make decisions as an impartial member of the Board of Trustees, not as a parent or representative of any special group; and
- Be aware that they are the official representatives of the school and should conduct themselves accordingly at all times.

## **Functions of the Board**

The Board is responsible for setting school policy, including review of all matters relating to the school's objectives and requirements for personnel, facility, and finances. The Board will see that its policies are carried out, will take responsibility for the school's financial viability, will stay informed about external regulations and legislation which affects the school (assuring TMA obeys the law), and will provide an Annual Report to community members. The Board hires, evaluates, and sets salary for the Head of School. The Board is responsible for the ongoing assessment of the school and its programs. The Board members have a fiscal responsibility to maintain the fiscal well-being of the school.

It is useful to keep in mind the differing roles and responsibilities of the Board and the Head of School. It is easy to confuse responsibility for day-to-day operation as a Board function, whereas, it is actually the business of the Head of School. Simply stated, the Board only develops policy; the Head of School applies and implements policy in all day-to-day operations.

The Board may solicit input from the corporation's membership for major initiatives as it is elected to be representative of the general membership. Yet the Board must act on behalf of the corporation's members on many governance matters (some of which may be unpopular, but fiscally necessary) without input from the community. In all instances, the Board should regularly, and proactively, inform the community's members of actions taken on behalf of the school.

The Board must ensure that TMA has a clearly defined mission statement. The Board should ensure that the school's goals and objectives are aligned with the mission statement. The Board must ensure that TMA has a comprehensive long-range plan for its services and a sharply defined and plausible short-range plan.

## **Authority of the Board**

The Board of Trustees shall have control of the property and business affairs of TMA, including the setting of tuition rates, the hiring and firing of staff, and the power to delegate these responsibilities. [Article V, Section 1 of Bylaws] Note: The Board has delegated the power for all staff hiring and firing to the Head of School.

The Board shall be empowered to authorize the borrowing of funds for the use of TMA. [Article V, Section 1 of Bylaws]

The Board shall have the power to promulgate such rules and regulations for the conduct and operation of the school, as it may from time to time deem advisable. [Article V, Section 2 of Bylaws] Note: This is not to be confused with day-to-day operations, which is the responsibility of the Head of School.

## **Board Meetings**

Open Board meetings are held four times a year and all community members are welcome to attend. Generally, the meetings are held on the second Wednesday in October, January, March, and May. Occasionally, the meeting will be changed due to scheduling conflicts. On such occasions, a notice of a new or special date will be announced to the membership of the corporation. Board Meeting minutes are posted in the front office.

### **Member Protocol for Board Meetings**

To submit a topic for inclusion to a Board meeting agenda, contact the [Board Secretary](#) directly at least five days prior to the meeting. This will ensure the topic is considered as a line item in the Board meeting agenda.

As the agenda is discussed, the Board President will recognize the topic and invite discussion by those community members and Board members present. The proceedings of TMA meetings shall be governed by and conducted according to the latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order: The Classic Manual of Parliamentary Procedure*, when not in conflict with TMA's Bylaws or Articles of Incorporation. [Article VIII, Section 1 of Bylaws]

## **Communication with the Board**

The Board of Trustees encourages open communication with and welcomes input from corporation members:

- [Molly Gamades](#), President
- [Gloria Fahrenthold](#), Vice President
- [Pule Calderon](#), Treasurer
- [Brian Dangelmaier](#), Secretary
- [Erin Morgan](#), Board Member
- [Kim White](#), Board Member
- [Dionne Williams](#), Board Member

## **Grievance Procedure**

Whenever possible, grievances should be resolved by discussion between the parties directly involved. When such discussion does not result in a satisfactory resolution, discuss the grievance with the Head of School.

If the grievance cannot be resolved, complete and return the [Board Grievance Form](#). The written complaint should be mailed or emailed to the attention of the [Board Secretary](#) who will bring the grievance to the attention of the Executive Committee. The TMA Board Executive Committee will review the grievance and a resolution will be effected within fifteen (15) school days of the initial presentation. Should you be dissatisfied with the decision, you may present the grievance statement to the full Board of Trustees.

## **Conflict of Interest Policy**

The Board of Trustees affirms that the trustees, officers, administrators, and other key employees of The Montessori Academy have an obligation to exercise their authority and to carry out the duties of their respective positions for the sole benefit of The Montessori Academy. They should avoid placing themselves in positions in which their personal interests are, may be, or appear to be in conflict with the interests of The Montessori Academy. Where a potential conflict of interest exists, it shall be the responsibility of the person involved or any other person with knowledge to notify the Board of Trustees and/or Head of School of the circumstances resulting in the potential conflict so that the Board of Trustees and/or Head of School can provide such guidance and take such action as it shall deem appropriate. Areas of potential conflict of interest are:

## 1. Financial Interests

- a. Ownership by the individual directly or indirectly of a material financial interest in any business or firm (i) from which The Montessori Academy obtains goods or services, or (ii) which is a competitor of the school.
  - b. Competition by the individual, directly or indirectly, with The Montessori Academy in the purchase or sale of property or any property right or interest.
  - c. Representation of The Montessori Academy by the individual in any transaction or activity in which the individual, directly or indirectly, has a material financial interest.
  - d. Any other circumstance in which the individual may profit, directly or indirectly, from any action or decision by The Montessori Academy in which he or she participates, or which he or she has knowledge.
2. Inside Information — Disclosure or use by the individual of confidential information about The Montessori Academy, its activities or intentions, for the personal profit or advantage of the individual or any person.
  3. Conflicting Interests other than Financial — Representation as director, officer, agent, or fiduciary of another company, institution, agency, or person in any transaction or activity which involves The Montessori Academy as an adverse party or with adverse interests.
  4. Gifts and Favors — Acceptance of gifts or favors from any firm or individual which does or seeks to do business with, or is a competitor of, The Montessori Academy under circumstances which imply reasonably that such action is intended to influence the individual in the performance of his or her duties.

No Trustee who is directly or indirectly involved in a potential conflict of interest shall be counted in determining the existence of quorum at any meeting of the Board where the potential conflict is considered, nor shall the member vote on any action of the Board regarding that potential conflict.



## **2018-19 Board of Trustees**

From left: Gloria Fahrenthold, Brian Dangelmaier, Pule Calderon, Molly Gamades, Kim White, Dionne Williams. Not pictured: Erin Morgan.

