# Governance at the Waldorf School of New Orleans

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## About this document

This document is intended to guide and document the
- General expectations regarding governance and decision-making.
- Specific expectations for each structure, be it a primary group, committee, or individual representative role.

This is expected to be a living document, which changes as we adapt to our current circumstances.

## How to make changes

Any changes to this document should follow our general decision-making procedures. If the change impacts multiple groups, they all need to approve the change. Whenever there is a change, all groups should be notified even if they do not have decision-making authority in the area that has changed.

## Copyright

# Our principles

## Waldorf School of New Orleans mission

The Waldorf School of New Orleans' mission is to awaken and draw out each student's individual strengths so that he or she will become a free thinker, a seeker of truth and knowledge, and an enthusiastic participant in the community. The Waldorf curriculum provides a developmentally appropriate educational course that supports the physical, spiritual, social, and intellectual growth of our students.

### Vision

An updated vision will be crafted during the work on the next 5-year plan.

### Principles

A list of principles will be crafted during the work on the next 5-year plan.

# Governance principles

In order to accomplish our mission we will operate in partnership with each other in a manner that is transparent, professional, efficient, respectful, kind, passionate, and responsive.

We understand the work we do at this school is part of a greater whole. We participate in decision making with consideration of how a decision would not only affect one's self, but how it will affect others as well, always keeping the mission and long term health of school in mind.

We will create organizational structures, policies, and procedures that
- support feedback and collaboration
- foster conscious agreements on a shared vision
- build trust across groups
- enable individuals to fully engage in their work
- cultivate leadership through self-improvement
- focus on sustainable institutional practices
- include both empowerment and accountability structures
- facilitate the smooth management of daily operations

Some of the mechanisms we utilize to reach these goals include
- democratic and consensus decision-making procedures
- republican representation
- operational committees
- group representatives
- documented mandates for groups and representatives
- ongoing review
- regular cross-group reporting
- continuous improvement and learning
- compassionate and attentive communication

## Governance aspirations

We acknowledge that Waldorf Education is individually transformative. Whether we are a student, parent, faculty, board member, or a volunteer we are all on a path for inner development. Our governance procedures and policies aim to reflect, support, and expand those individual transformations.

One of the purposes of Waldorf Education is to educate children in a way that result in adults with the facilities to be peaceful collaborators. The governance structures of the school can be a model for adult structures that support peaceful decision-making methods. In order to discover those methods we need to partake in lifelong learning and experimentation as adults to build those structures, find which ones work, and scale them.

Our work governing the school can also be educational to the school's children. This is similar to how having a single teacher take the students through many grades shows them that adults are always learning. By being transparent and collaborative when we make decisions—even though we may sometimes have conflict and struggle—our children see that we are working to build a peaceful adult community. By observing our successes and failures, they will hopefully see it is worthwhile to pursue this endeavor, that it is within reach, and they will eventually use what they see works and improve on what does not work.

# Typical structures and procedures

## Organizational structures

Our organizational structures empower and hold accountable groups and individuals.

### Primary groups

The primary governing groups are the administration team, the board of directors, the faculty, and the parent organization.

The primary groups work in partnership together, collaborating on decisions, each with mandates that empower them to make decisions within their defined sphere of influence. They do this by continual open and direct communication, facilitated by ongoing reporting and review.

Our school is not lead by just a single administrator or just the faculty. The Administration, Board, and Faculty share the responsibilities in running the school, with regular input and assistance from the Parents Council.

### Representative groups

The primary groups may create operational committees or task forces with mandates to accomplish things and/or make decisions.

### Representative individuals

Individuals within a group may be given mandates to accomplish things and/or make decisions.

### Creation and dissolution

Whenever a new group or individual representative post is created the expectations of the new structure should be decided-upon and documented, following the templates and procedures included in this document.

When a group or representative post is dissolved it should be documented as well. This includes moving it the 'No longer active' section in the active and inactive structures document.

## Problem resolution procedure

If anybody has concerns about the operations of a group or individual they should following the three steps below in order to provide direct feedback and time for improvements.

1) Directly communicate concerns.
   Give them reasonable time to improve.

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2) Go to leadership for help if there are no improvements or you are uncomfortable directly communicating.
- Give them reasonable time to improve.

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3) If there is no resolution (they are either unwilling or unable to improve), then the mandating group may call a vote of confidence.
   If the majority of the mandating group does not vote in confidence, then a new election is held for that representative group or individual.

# Typical group and committee expectations

Below are the default expectations for groups. Some groups or positions may have different arrangements, as specified in their own separate documentation. Any newly created group will adhere to the default expectations unless specified otherwise.

## Primary and representative groups

### Membership eligibility
Members are granted a vote in decisions. Each member has an equal vote.

Attendance at 3 of the last 5 group meetings grants membership.

Any group whose mandate requires a faculty representative must have regular meetings at a time outside of regular teaching hours.

Individuals who are involved with a group but not yet members have a voice, just not an official vote (yet). Individuals who were members but do not meet the attendance requirements automatically lose their membership vote.

Note this covers both volunteer committees and also primary groups such as the Administration team. For example, a newly hired team member would officially wait until the 4th team meeting until they had a vote on any decisions that the entire team makes.

### Decision-making
We aim for consensus and use majority vote as the minimum requirement.

We understand consensus to mean something different than requiring all voters to be in unanimous agreement. Instead, we define consensus to mean that appropriate attention has been given to issues raised by those who choose to stand aside in a vote, that nobody votes to block, and that the other voters agree.

Most decisions are required to be made by a simple majority, meaning that votes in favor must exceed votes in opposition.

Certain critical decisions may require greater support in order to be approved. Such requirements must be specified in advance. These decisions would be decided through either a super majority (some determined percentage greater than simple majority) or through unanimous vote. Establishing this method of decision-making should be chosen carefully as it gives a minority the power to prevent the affirmation of proposals.

Voters are allowed to abstain and not register a vote in favor or against a motion. Abstentions are not counted in favor of or in opposition to a motion.

For example, for a simple majority decision if the votes are tallied as:
        5 – for
        4 – against
        2 – abstain
This would result in a passed motion because a simple majority had been reached.

Abstention should be reserved only for circumstances where someone has determined that she or he does not have sufficient information to substantiate a position, or feels their vote would constitute a conflict of interest.

Quorum is 51% of the membership.

## Review
We aim for a self-review and review by other primary groups every school year.

Reviews use the review template and review process outlined separately, unless specified differently in a group or individual's mandate.

For the purposes of review, the Parents Council officers are the sole representatives of the parent's organization who take part in the review process.


## Reporting and communication
Monthly reporting to other primary groups is expected.

Using the reporting template, a monthly report is sent to all primary groups. Additionally, any decisions that result in a change or creation of a new policy or procedure must be communicated directly to the holder of that policy or procedure documentation.

For the purposes of monthly reports, the Parents Council officers are the sole representatives of the parent's organization that receive the reports.

# Committees and task forces

The purpose of a committee is to do the work of the group more efficiently than the whole. The committee acts as an arm of the group.

All power given to committees enabling them to act is *delegated* power and can be revoked at any time by a simple majority of group members.

Committees can only make recommendations on proper courses of action and work on tasks that have been approved by the group, unless they have been specifically empowered to make decisions on behalf of the group. Committees are held accountable for accomplishing what they are empowered to do.

Committees must be approved by the group(s) creating the committee, and they should be given a clear mandate as to the scope of their tasks, the range of decisions they are allowed to make, a timeline for expected results, etc. The less articulated the mandate provided to committees the greater the possibility for committees to arbitrarily assume powers that were not consciously delegated by the group.

## Naming conventions

Committee – ongoing working group, a standing committee
Task force – ad hoc working group that is expected to dissolve after completing a specific goal or task

## Formation and dissolution

The membership of one or more groups can create committees to serve at the pleasure of the membership of the group. For example, a group may vote to create an ad-hoc or standing committee with a mandate to conduct research and investigation into subjects, in order to vet alternative solutions, report and make a recommendation to the membership of the group, and complete tasks approved by the group.

Every effort will be made to fill committees with expertise in that area and to have Faculty involvement on every standing committee.

A resolution will document committee type, committee mandate including purpose and deliverables, committee members and/or committee membership requirements.

The problem resolution procedure should be followed wherever appropriate.

The group may replace one or more committee members at any time by a resolution. The forming group may dissolve committees at any time by a resolution.

## Reporting and communication

Committees will remain accountable to the governing groups by means of reporting. Reporting will consist of monthly reports sent to all primary groups. Additionally, any committee decisions that result in a change or creation of a new policy or procedure must be communicated directly to the holder of that policy or procedure documentation.

Committees are to accept comments via the preferred method of the commenter, such an in-person discussion, or over email.

All members of the committee are expected to evaluate the comments and determine what, if anything should be done to address them. No formal response or tracking of comments is required.

## Committee management

Each committee should keep a list of
- committee budget and deliverables
- ongoing tasks
- current projects
- possible future projects

Ideally this list will remain accessible to anybody in the group, and anyone can add an item to the committee task/project list for consideration by the committee.

# Individual representative structures

The group grants representatives additional decision-making powers. The power rests with the group; these representatives serve the group.

Representatives may be one of the following
- voting member on another primary group or committee with a mandate
- individual with a mandate to get certain things done and/or make certain decisions

## Creation and dissolution
This follows the same procedures as groups, including the problem resolution procedure.

## Reporting and communication
Representatives of a group that sit on another group are expected to report back to their group on key discussion and decisions that took place in their role as a group representative. While there are no formal reporting requirements, representatives should lean towards over-reporting to ensure suitable transparency exists.

Representatives are expected to facilitate getting input from the larger group to bring back to the smaller group.

## Review
Representatives are reviewed annually on the work they have been doing for that role, along the same review procedures as outlined below (unless a more specific procedure has been documented).

# Collaborative decision-making procedure

Below is the default communication process that we aim to follow for any decision-making process. This procedure prioritizes input from all groups and accountability afforded to the group burdened with the decision-making power.

The goals of this process are:
 - Make the best decision possible.
 - Supported by as many groups as possible.
 - With the reasoning behind the decision understood by as many groups as possible.

The aim is not to have every day-to-day decision run by every group. This should only encompass major decisions, particularly ones that impact multiple groups. For example, the school budget is one such decision.

Groups that do not have ownership of a decision are not accountable for approval of a decision, and therefore may provide input only.

There may be some decisions whose impact is large enough or they have been highlighted as being points of contention in the past where we decide that all or multiple groups must vote and approve the decision before it is finalized. That will not be the default expectation, those specific decisions and that process will be documented elsewhere.

There may be some decisions where the decision-making procedure is documented more specifically, and that would override this generalized process.

Deadlines for a decision are decided-upon by the group empowered to make the decision. Other groups may not impact the deadline by their input or lack thereof.

We understand circumstances may require some decisions be made more quickly or provide less opportunities for input than we wish. For example, this could be due to security, privacy, or safety issues. In such cases, after such a decision is made, it is strongly suggested to take decision again through the steps below, to provide an opportunity to revise and improve the decision.

Definitions:
"Decision" - Meaning any policy, procedure, or document that falls under one of the group's domain to decide upon.

"Groups" - Administration, Board, Faculty, and Parents Council.

## Procedure summary

Step 1 – Intention: The group that aims to make a decision should state its intention, in a way that invites discussion.

Step 2 – Discussion: Discussion between the groups about the intention. The intention may evolve during this discussion.

Step 3 – Decision: The group makes the decision.


## Procedure details

Below are suggestions on how one group would state their intentions, engage in discussion with other groups, and make a decision in a collaborative yet efficient fashion.

### 1) Provide early opportunity for input

Solicit input from all groups who will be impacted by the decision.
  — Ask for open-ended input, possibly referencing same decision made last year/previously.
  — Include deadline for input, ideally providing at least 1-week lead-time.
  — Support as many communication methods as possible. For example, this might include sending an email, soliciting input at a group meeting, sending a survey, directly calling or talking to individuals that are likely to have a strong opinion on the decision.
  — Get input from the larger groups, and also any particular working groups/committees related to the decision.


### 2) Draft decision

 Craft a draft proposal of decision. Ideally this would include:
  — Highlight changes from previous similar decisions.
  — Include reasons, goals, thinking behind decision.
  — Note any questions that are still being considered.


### 3) Submit decision for review

Send the draft decision to all groups for review and input.
  — Provide a deadline for input, ideally at least 1 week.
  — Note some parts of the draft may not be relevant to share with all groups, or the language may need to be changed.
  — Support as many communication methods as possible.
  — Get input from the larger groups, and also any particular working groups/committees related to the decision.

— It may be appropriate to get input from a select group or individuals in a group before sending around to the larger group.

## 4) Consider revisions and further input

Based on input from groups, decide if revisions are necessary.

Based on scope of revisions and deadline to finalize decision, decide if there is time for another round of review and input. Remember the other groups do not have voting approval on the decision and we trust the group making the decision to make the best decision possible. Weigh that with our desire to have as many groups support the decision as possible.

## 5) Finalize decision

Make decision using whatever voting/decision-making method is appropriate for the decision, per the group's decision-making procedure.

## 6) Report on final decision to all impacted groups

Send the final decision to all groups as finalized.
  — Support as many communication methods as possible.
  — Consider whether the decision means a policy, procedure, form, or handbook needs to be updated.

# Policy creation procedure

Any group and any individual may propose a policy to be created or changed.

If the proposed policy falls under an area that is already part of a specific group's mandate, then that group may vote on the policy suggestion or change.

If the policy is not already within a specific group's mandate then all groups impacted by the policy have ownership rights, until all groups impacted vote to give the mandate to a specific group.

For example, somebody proposes a policy to stock all water coolers with organic coconut water. This impacts what the staff and faculty have available to drink at work, and so both groups have a vote on whether this policy is passed. The cost of the water is larger than is supported by the current water budget and as the board must approve the budget, the board also must approve this policy.

If a group proposes a policy, then it must be voted on by the group(s) with the mandate for the area impacted by the policy. If an individual proposes a policy, it is up to the group(s) to decide whether it should be voted on.

The procedure to enact a policy is decided upon by the group(s) responsible for enacting the policy. Any group and any individual may suggest a new procedure or change to an existing procedure. It is entirely up the group charged with enacting the procedure as to whether they change it or not.


## Policy and procedure documentation

The group that has the mandate to oversee the policy is charged with maintaining documentation.

The group with the mandate to enact the policy is charged with maintaining the procedure documentation.

When more than one group has the mandate and/or enacts a policy a single document owner group shall be selected, that is responsible for ensuring the documentation is kept up to date.

Policies will be documented using the policy template documented separately.

# Review procedure

The review process aims to provide a formal opportunity for representative individuals and groups to provide feedback to each other on the work they have been doing. In this way we can congratulate each other on work done and help each other continue to grow and improve in our work at service of the school community.

Each review will be placed on the calendar. The group or individual who has the mandate over the calendar will determine the review dates annually.

Reviews will use the review template documented separately, unless documented otherwise.

## Sample review procedure

At least 4 week prior to review date: Group being reviewed does their self-review.

At least 3 weeks prior to review date: Groups are notified of upcoming review. Blank review document is sent to each individual in the reviewing groups. They should take time to reflect and prepare input.

At least 2-week prior to review: Each group will fill out the review document during a group meeting.

The document will then be sent to the primary contact for the group being reviewed.

At least 1-week prior to review: All collected review documents are sent out to the group being reviewed.

The review: At least one representative of each other group will attend the others review session, to answer any questions the group has about the reviews provided. They will be expected to report back to their own group on any questions asked and reactions to the review.

Reviews from each group are gone over one-by-one. Questions are asked, and possible actions to make improvements made note of or future areas to work on noted.

For example:

1. 2nd week of January: Board does their self-review.
2. 3rd week January: Blank review documents for the board sent out to individuals on Board, Faculty, and Administration team.

3.  4th week January: The Faculty would discuss and fill out a review document for the board. They should send the document to the Board president. The Administrator would do the same.
4.  1st week February: Board president sends out review documents to board.
5.  2nd week February: Board goes over reviews from over their own self-review and input from all other groups during their next meeting. At that meeting the Admin and Faculty representative(s) will be available to answer questions and take any responses on their reviews back to their groups.
6.  3rd week February: Board sends their self-review to other groups, along with any notes or responses to other groups review desired.

# References

Below are some references for learning more and/or have helped inform the creation of this document.

# Governance

## Books

Books by Torin M. Finser, including
- Organizational Integrity: How to Apply the Wisdom of the Body to Develop Healthy Organizations
- A Second Classroom: Parent-Teacher Relationships in a Waldorf School
- School Renewal: A Spiritual Journey for Change

Books by Christopher Schaefer, including
- Partnerships of Hope: Building Waldorf School Communities

Engaged Community: The Challenge of Self-Governance in Waldorf Education, by Jon McAlice.

Leading Through Collaboration: Guiding Groups to Productive Solutions, John Glaser.

Republican Academies: Rudolf Steiner on self-management, experiential study and self-education in the life of a college of teachers, by Francis Gladstone.

Administrative Explorations, edited by David Mitchell and David Alsop.

Art of Administration: Viewpoints on Professional Management in Waldorf Schools, edited by David Mitchell. Ebook version:
http://www.waldorflibrary.com/index.php?option=com_booklibrary&task=view&id=894&catid=65&Itemid=3

Creativity, Inc.: Overcoming the Unseen Forces That Stand in the Way of True Inspiration, by Ed Catmull and Amy Wallace.

## Documents

Effective Practices: Governance, AWSNA website
http://leadtogether.org/personal-reflections-on-waldorf-school-governance-and-effective-practices-lynn-kern/

Young Schools' Guide, AWSNA publication
http://www.waldorfresearchinstitute.org/pdf/YoungSCHOOLSGuide.pdf

Emerson Waldorf School governance document
http://www.emersonwaldorf.org/wp-content/uploads/ews-governance-document-51311.pdf

Rudolf Steiner School of Ann Arbor: Working Together document

Chicago Waldorf School governance documents

Siskiyou School governance document
http://www.siskiyouschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/THE-FOUR-PILLARS1.pdf

C4 Tech & Design Rules of Order document

Systems of Accountability and Evaluations: A Toolkit for Worker Cooperatives and Democratic Workplaces, by Alison Booth Gribas and Stacey Cordeiro, Democracy at Work Network
http://institute.usworker.coop/resources/designing-effective-systems-evaluation-and-accountability-worker-cooperatives


## Articles

The Threefold Social Organism: An Introduction, by Stephen E. Usher, Ph.D.
http://www.rudolfsteinerweb.com/Threefold_Social_Order.php

Cooperative Governance and Management for Small Organizations, presentation by Melissa Hoover and Joe Rinehart
http://institute.usworker.coop/resources/worker-cooperative-governance-and-management-prezi


## Websites

LeadTogether: Collaboration, Leadership & School Development
http://leadtogether.org

## Conferences

Regional Conference on Waldorf School Governance, at Tamarack Waldorf School, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, April 2015.

# Procedural best practices

## Policy writing

http://manuals.ucdavis.edu/resources/GuidetoWritingPolicy.pdf

http://www.mapl.com.au/policy/tp.htm

http://policy.boisestate.edu/policy-writing-guide/

## Consensus and decision-making procedures

Robert's Rules of Order

Conflict and Consensus: a handbook on Formal Consensus Decision-making, by C.T. Butler and Amy Rothstein. Ebook available:
http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/c-t-butler-and-amy-rothstein-on-conflict-and-consensus-a-handbook-on-formal-consensus-decisionm

http://seedsforchange.org.uk/resources

http://www.consensusdecisionmaking.org

## Board

501 Commons – Best Practices for Boards
http://www.501commons.org/resources/tools-and-best-practices/boards-governance/501CommonsBestPracticesforBoards.doc

http://www.501commons.org/resources/tools-and-best-practices/boards-governance

## Administration

http://www.nais.org