**College of Teachers Manual**

**Rudolf Steiner School of Ann Arbor**

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**Role of the College – From the School Handbook**

At the Rudolf Steiner School of Ann Arbor, ultimate responsibility for all matters of pedagogy rests with the College of Teachers, a core group of full-time Faculty dedicated to the philosophical integrity and the long-term interests of the school. Any issue regarding curriculum, methodology, student learning concerns, etc., falls into the decision making realm of the College of Teachers. The full faculty assists the work of the College during the business meetings, and by the faculty committees, which take their mandate from and report to the College.

**College/Faculty Committees**

The College extends its work through the following College Committees.

* Faculty Evaluation Team, or FET
* Faculty Development Committee, or FDC
* Curriculum Support Committee, or CSC
* Pedagogical Integration Team, or PIT
* Festivals Committee
* Personnel Committee (co-led with Board of Trustees)
* Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, or DEI (co-led with Board of Trustees) –

These committees take their mandate from and report to the College. Each spring, during continuous improvement, the College reviews the mandate of each committee to make certain that it reflects the current way the group is functioning. Each year, a College member, such as the College Chair or one of the Faculty Chairs, takes on the task of ensuring that each of these committees is fully staffed and accomplishing the tasks agreed to by the College. Ideally, there will be one or more College members on each committee. The chairperson of the College committees should ideally be a College member.

**The College Imagination**

The College imagination was spoken by Rudolf Steiner at the inaugural lecture to the teachers of the first Waldorf School on August 21, 1919. This was transcribed by three participants. At the beginning of our meetings, we speak one version of the imagination together as a reminder that the College is a spiritual body as well as a practically oriented governing body. Through working together, we seek to form a vessel where spiritual impulses that can lead to the health of our education can enter. From the notes from Caroline von Heydebrand:

*“A drop of Time Light falls into the vessel of courage from the active Time Spirit.”*

**Key Tasks of the College of Teachers**

The tasks of the College of Teachers include:

* Providing opportunities for study, personal development, and artistic activity, in College and Faculty meetings
* Forming and staffing committees to carry out essential tasks in a smaller, more specialized, and effective group.
* Providing input on hiring full-time faculty and administrators so the Hiring Teams and Carrying Groups can make better-informed decisions.
* Examining curriculum topics on an ongoing basis and updating the curriculum to meet the evolving needs of the students.
* Providing input on the school budget as it relates to pedagogical concerns.
* Selecting the College Chair and endorsing the selection of Faculty Chairs
* Selecting College members to serve on the Board of Trustees
* Examining school governance structure and identify and decide on changes, consulting with the Board of Trustees, if warranted, that are needed to ensure that the school evolves.
* Participate in the Continuous Improvement process each spring.
* Providing input and direction for special initiatives in the school, such as large-scale building projects, formation of new classes, or other major changes that affect the school as a whole.
* Provide effective mentoring and evaluation within the school.

**College Membership**

Potential College members include full-time faculty members, School Administrator, and Administrative Coordinators at all levels. Prior to being asked to become a College member, the College will review that prospective members are in good standing and are capable of taking on the additional work of College membership. Potential members will be employed full-time at RSSAA for at least one year. An employee who has recently served on the College of Teachers at another Waldorf School may be asked to join in their first year at the school.

At the end of the school year, the College will identify the eligible new College members for the coming year. All members who meet the requirements for membership will be contacted by the College Chair or designated College member. An invitation to join the College will be extended, along with a conversation about the meaning of the task of being a College member. New College members will ideally begin attending meetings at the back-to-school meetings after the summer holidays.

**Role of College Members**

College members are deeply committed to the long-term vitality of the school, pedagogy and spiritual foundations of Waldorf Education which were created by Rudolf Steiner. College members should be devoted to ongoing study of Anthroposophy and Waldorf pedagogy, seeking always to better understand the needs of our community and the needs of the students. College members are also encouraged to take on a meditative practice, such as Rudolf Steiner outlined in his books, How to Know Higher Worlds and Theosophy. Ongoing study and meditative practice outside of the College will help inform the decisions made in the College.

**Role of College Chair**

The College Chair is the spokesperson for the College of Teachers and is responsible for supporting the College in doing its work. This includes ensuring the health of the College meeting and setting agendas with support of HUB. The College Chair engages in regular conversation with the School Administrator. The College Chair also stays in close communication with the College Committees and ensures that they are running smoothly. The College Chair provides oversight and support to the EC, LS, and HS Carrying Groups. Ideally, the College Chair would serve for a minimum of a three-year term to provide continuity. The College Chair is also a member of the Board of Trustees and Board Executive Committee.

**Attendance at College Meetings**

By becoming a member of the College of Teachers, one commits to striving toward the spiritual health of the school. Participating in this way requires continuity. Missing an occasional meeting due to illness, family circumstances, or school business is unavoidable. However, if a College member finds that they must regularly miss meetings, it would be better to step off the College until more favorable conditions return. This is also important because of the definition of a quorum for decision making in the College.

From time to time, circumstances arise that necessitate a member to leave the College of Teachers either temporarily or permanently. Those who wish to leave or rejoin the College should contact the College Chair so this can be communicated.

**Confidentiality**

By taking on College membership, all College members agree to keep confidentiality. This means that discussions about College items should not be done outside of College meetings with non-College members. Conversations with non-College members such as one’s spouse or other faculty members outside of the College meetings can have a negative effect on the work of the College and the individuals involved. Care should be taken not to leave College documents such as agendas and minutes lying around in common areas or on computer screens unattended.

**School Governance**

See the school handbook for a description of the Governing structure of the school beyond the College, including the Board of Trustees and Administration, HUB, and the Carrying Groups.

**Decision making process for selecting College Chair**

At the end of the school year, the College of Teachers will provide an opportunity for general review of the work of the College over the previous year. It is important that the College has faith in the current College and Faculty Chairs and that the HUB group works well together.

From time to time the need will arise to find a new College or Faculty Chair. Ideally, there will be as much continuity as possible within the HUB group and terms will overlap.

Choosing the College Chair will take place within the College of Teachers. Unless serious concerns have arisen, a College Chair will ideally serve for at least 3 years. In the event that a new College Chair needs to be selected, a nomination process will ensue prior to the summer break. Ideally, the process of selecting a new College Chair will be finished by the end of the school year. Any member of the College may nominate themselves or another College member. The Carrying Group members are not eligible to serve as College Chair while also serving in one of these other roles. Administrative Coordinators are not eligible to be College Chair due to the conflict between working as the supervisor of the Administrator as Board member and being supervised by the Administrator in their role. Some desirable qualities in the College Chair include:

* Mastery of Waldorf pedagogy in their curriculum area with a broad overview of all areas in the school
* Long-term employment at RSSAA
* Ability and willingness to work closely with the Administrator and Carrying Groups, including areas of employment, student dismissal, and crisis management.
* Ability to communicate clearly.
* Ability to organize and set College agendas.
* Willingness to ensure the facilitation of College meetings (this can be delegated if desired)
* Ability to delegate work.
* Willingness to serve on the Board of Trustees and Board Executive Committee

The College will consider all the nominees for College Chair and make a final decision by consensus.

The College and Faculty Chairs should be given extra time in their schedules, if needed, to facilitate doing the extra work needed for the position as well as possible.

**Process for Selecting Faculty Chairs**

The selection of a new Faculty Chair will include the departmental Carrying Group consulting with the full-time/core faculty members of the respective faculty group being served, with the final endorsement being made by the College of Teachers. If possible, Faculty Chairs will serve for at least 3 years to ensure that the critical working relationship with the Campus Coordinator has stability. Concerns of the work of Faculty Chairs may be raised at the annual review of the College work or may be discussed with the College Chair.

**Agenda Setting**

The agenda of the College of Teachers is set by the College Chair with input from HUB at the weekly meeting. Agenda items include the following:

* College verse, quiet reflection, and review of previous minutes.
* General announcements of interest to the College
* Study, artistic activity
* Regular reviews and reports from College Committees. FET, FDC, PIT and CSC should report to the College at least monthly. Other committees may report less frequently.
* Ongoing agenda items relating to the work of the College outlined above.
* Reviews of major decisions, particularly those that were identified as needing regular review.
* Regular reviews of the work of the College

In general, agenda items should be prepared in advance. Major agenda items should be well thought through before being brought to the College.

At the start of the year, the College Chair should include discussion about the meeting time, location, and shared agreements. Meetings typically take place on Thursdays starting at 3:30 or 3:45 and end by 5:30 at the Lower School campus to support those with children in after school care. Shared agreements should be made around such topics as meeting location, study material, use of cell phones, minute taking, and respectful meeting conduct.

**Decision Making in the College of Teachers**

Not every agenda item needs to undergo a consensus decision making process in the College. Many items may be sent to formal committees or ad-hoc work groups for further refinement. Following is a partial list of issues not requiring consensus decision making:

* items delegated to committees.
* changes in operational details of the school not involving policy changes.
* hiring decisions being made by the Carrying Groups. Input from the College for full-time and program lead positions will be sought out by the Carrying Groups. Details on how this input will be gathered is laid out in the Pedagogical Governance Model.
* minor curricular changes that do not involve changes in budget or significant changes in personnel (examples: changes in the schedule, changes in the format in which certain classes are taught, etc.)
* staffing College committees
* providing input on budget

However, major agenda items require consensus decision making. Following is a partial list of issues requiring consensus decision making:

* significant policy changes
* major curriculum changes to agreed-on scope and sequence documents.
* changes to school governance structure
* formation of new College committees
* other major new initiatives in the school
* addition or elimination of full-time roles
* selection of teachers to be invited to join the College of Teachers
* selection of the College Chair
* endorsement of Faculty chairs

It is essential to know, in advance of a discussion, who has the responsibility for making the decision and by what process. This should be worked out by the College Chair upon consultation with other HUB members or committee chairs as appropriate. If the College Chair is unclear about whether a College agenda item requires consensus decision making, it is better to err on the side of caution and consult with HUB and/or the College of Teachers.

**Consensus Decision Making**

The College of Teachers and faculty agree to utilize consensus decision-making as a method of reaching agreement for important decisions. A core value of the school is to include full-time faculty and administration in important decisions. Depending on the type of decision, HUB will help direct the decision making process to the correct group, which could include the College of Teachers, the faculty of one level of the school, HUB, or the Carrying Group of the appropriate level. Consensus does not mean that everyone must be completely satisfied with the final outcome. Total satisfaction of everyone involved in the process does not occur in every situation. The decision, however, must be acceptable enough that all will agree to support the group in living with the decision. In a consensus decision, each member of the group should be able to say, “I can live with that.”

**Process for Consensus Decision Making**

In order to make good use of limited meeting time, the following process is used for making decisions requiring consensus decision making. The amount of time between meetings will typically be a week for most groups with regularly scheduled meetings but may be accelerated if needed in time-sensitive situations.

**First meeting**: At the first meeting, the agenda item is introduced. The chair or appropriate people explain the issue and give a timeline for when the decision must be made. Written materials should be carefully prepared and presented for group members to consider.

**Second meeting**: The second meeting will occur after individual group members have had time to read the written materials and think about the item, generally after at least one intervening night. The idea of “sleeping on it” is seen as a key practice in reaching thoughtful decisions. At the second meeting, the topic is discussed with the idea of gaining as many points of view as possible. In some instances, the group may choose to make a decision in the second meeting if all members feel comfortable with moving ahead or if a decision is urgent and consensus can be reached, though generally a decision will not be made until the third meeting.

**Third meeting**: The third meeting, after having had at least one additional night to reflect on the discussion from the previous meeting, group members come to a proposed decision. Ideally, a proposal will come out of a deep interest in listening to each member of the group. It is the task of the College Chair and each College member to determine if a proposal that everyone can live with has arisen. In the College, Faculty, or HUB, decisions can only be made when a 2/3 quorum of the active College membership is present. Ideally, Carrying Groups should make decisions only when all members are in agreement. Chairs may seek approval from members not able to be at meetings. Major decisions should include all group members whenever possible. If consensus cannot be reached, the groups should table the item and bring it back for discussion the following week. Additional work outside of the meeting can be assigned to a committee or small group to facilitate the process of working through issues.

Blocking: Blocking a decision is rare. If a group member feels strongly that the decision being proposed is harmful to the school, he or she may choose to block the decision from moving forward at that meeting. The reasons for the block must be clearly stated. Over the ensuing days and week, the member blocking and other group members should work toward a decision acceptable to all.

Standing aside: Standing aside is a more common response for group members who disagree with some part of a decision. When voting, a group member may state that they stand aside on a decision. The member should clearly state the reasons for not supporting a decision. Standing aside means that a member is concerned but will trust the judgement of the group over their own personal opinion. When two or more members choose to stand aside in a decision, the group chair should strongly consider putting off the decision until another meeting so the decision can be more fully supported.

**Fourth meeting and beyond**: Though working through consensus is time consuming, some critical agenda items may need additional time. The chair and group members should be sensitive as to the importance of decisions and how much time should be given. In this case, an agenda item may be brought in a fourth meeting.

However, if a consensus decision still cannot be reached because there is a block, the group chair must determine if this is a time sensitive issue. If members of the group believe the issue is time sensitive and a decision cannot be further delayed, then the chair will call for a vote to validate the time sensitive nature of the issue. If ¾ of the members present agree that the issue is time sensitive, then the issue at hand will be put to a majority vote. For a majority vote to move forward, a quorum of 2/3 of the current group’s membership must be present. A majority vote will pass when 2/3 of the members present at the meeting vote in favor of the resolution. Note that in a rare instance, a 2/3 quorum and 2/3 majority vote could occur, but less than 50% of the group could be voting in favor, in which case the decision would not be valid. Therefore, for a majority vote to be valid, more than 50% of the group members need to vote in favor of the resolution.

In the case of a major decision by the College of Teachers, if the College is deadlocked on a time sensitive issue and a majority decision cannot be reached, the issue will be referred to a joint session of the Executive Committee of the Board plus the College. This group will follow the same consensus decision making process as outlined here.

Beyond the commitment of time, working toward consensus requires the willingness to attend to one’s own attitudes and feelings and other group members’ attitudes and feelings. As Marjorie Spock noted in her essay, “Group Moral Artistry”:

*“Listening is the art of opening oneself to what lives in another’s spirit. Groups that foster the fundamental social art of listening create a common higher consciousness. From this level of attentiveness to self and others, we create an environment for useful truths to emerge. This is the essence of decision making.”*

**Summer Decision Making**

Because consensus building is a core value of the school, it is essential that key decisions affecting the long-term health of the school be done to the greatest extent possible within the school year and involve all active College members. Each year by the beginning of April, the HUB group will set a schedule for faculty, committee, and College meetings to conclude the school year and to begin the following school year. For the most part, major decisions and discussions should take place within the bounds of these meetings and the school year. Major policy changes and other critical decisions should be avoided outside of the regular school year, or when members are away on school business such as high school end-of-year trips or the annual trip to Maine, or when multiple teachers are away on class trips.

When approaching the end of the school year, the College will make a decision about what agenda items to table until the College reconvenes. Recognizing that important work of the school must continue, the College will designate to the HUB group and Carrying Groups certain tasks that need to take place over the summer, and the HUB group will be empowered to make decisions after the last scheduled College meeting in June, until the designated return date in August.

Regular HUB meetings will be set up and announced to HUB members well in advance of summer so travel plans can be coordinated to include as many HUB meetings as possible.

HUB will operate in the summer months using the same consensus building and decision making process as outlined in this document for the College of Teachers. Ideally, at least two members of each Carrying Group and the College Chair will be present in summer HUB discussions and decisions.

Summer agenda items delegated to HUB may include but are not limited to: full-time faculty hiring without College input; important decisions around budget that were unforeseen or did not yet exist during the school year; operational decisions needed to prepare classroom spaces. No major new initiatives will be decided on by HUB over the summer months unless the group deems such decisions as critical to school operations and all members of the HUB group present are in agreement. The HUB chair will make every effort to contact all HUB members who are out of town.

Should a crisis situation occur, HUB will deal with the situation as best as possible and consult with other College members if it seems necessary and helpful.

**Additional Information from the Employee Handbook**

**College Committees**

In order to facilitate the work of the College, the following committees have been organized. College committees are accountable to the College of Teachers. Committee mandates are available for each of these committees.

**Faculty Evaluation Team (FET)**

The FET provides feedback to faculty members to further their professional development and help them strive for excellence in their teaching. FET arranges and manages formal evaluations of full-time and part-time faculty members from Early Childhood to Grade 12, and also ensures the evaluation of assistants, after-care personnel, and coaches. The FET, in conjunction with the Faculty Development Committee, arranges evaluations by external Master Teachers. The FET also arranges, collects, and reviews the input from the annual Parent Surveys. The FET consists of the Faculty Chairs and other long-time, experienced Waldorf teachers. The FET Committee reports to the College of Teachers.

**Faculty Development Committee (FDC)**

At the beginning of the school year each faculty member is paired with a colleague to whom special attention and support is pledged. The FDC facilitates mentors, ‘buddy’ partnerships, teacher development and support of all part-time and full-time Faculty. This may involve coordinating visits from teachers outside our school or arranging for an RSSAA teacher to visit another school. The school is committed to providing opportunities for continued education and renewal for its teachers. The FDC recommends opportunities for professional development, collects requests, and grants financial assistance in accord with its overseeing of the FDC budget.

**Curriculum Support Committee (CSC)**

The purpose of the Curriculum Support Committee (CSC) is to ensure high quality implementation of the curriculum, PreK-12, at RSSAA. This is not a committee that performs teacher evaluation, but rather one that provides support so teachers can deliver a quality curriculum experience for students and communicates information about our curriculum to the parent body and wider community. This committee will develop messaging that elucidates how Waldorf education is different and exceptional. The CSC will work with the Faculty Evaluation Team (FET) and Faculty Development Committee (FDC) to ensure that teachers are getting the support they need, and that evaluation and mentoring needs are met.

**Festivals Committee**

The Festivals Committee is responsible for overseeing all of the school-wide celebrations. The LS Assembly and Michaelmas are examples of the kind of events for which the committee accepts responsibility. Some celebrations are hosted by one of the grades, such as the Halloween Festival and the May Day Celebration. For these events, Class Teachers and parent volunteers work closely with the Festivals Committee to organize the celebration.

**Pedagogical Integration Team (PIT)**   
The Pedagogical Integration Team works to coordinate and support the work of the other College Committees (FET, FDC, CSC, Festivals). The Team meets monthly and includes the College Chair (who serves as PIT Chair), the School Administrator, and the Chairs of the key College committees. PIT takes responsibility for ensuring that the needs of faculty, staff and parents which involve more than one of the committees are met.