

Swan River Montessori Charter School

School Board Application

Member type (select one)

Parent

Teacher

Community Member

Name: Amy Jensen

Why are you interested in serving as a school board member for SRMCS?

I love that the SRMCS school board is made up of parents, teachers and community members working together to ensure that the vision and mission of SRMCS is carried out and the school remains an authentic Montessori school with the best interests of students, families and staff in mind.

What is your relevant personal and/or professional experience?

I have been teaching since 2000 with the majority of those years of as a Montessori lower elementary teacher. I am passionate about the Montessori method and ensuring that Swan River stays a highly regarded, authentic Montessori charter school.

What area(s) of expertise and/or contributions do you feel you can make as a board member?

I have served on the school board for a number of years and am well versed in the workings of a school board. I have completed many yearly training courses provided by our authorizer, Osprey Wilds, on such areas as school finance, open meeting law, school employment policies, and other school board relevant topics.

Do you have any other volunteer experience?

My volunteer time is spent in service of the school. I help out with Movie Night and Breakfast with The Bunny each year as well as running a Swan River booth during the annual Trick-or-Treat Monticello community event.

Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself?

I feel that I am a person that makes reasoned and informed decisions taking into consideration the needs of all the stakeholders of our school. I appreciate the opportunity I have had to serve my school, the students and their families and hope to continue to do so.

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Name: Amy Savage

Why are you interested in serving as a school board member for SRMCS?

I would like to continue serving as a school board member to help preserve and support Swan River Montessori's vision alongside my fellow board members and the families of SRMCS. I want to help ensure that Swan River remains a vital part of our community for many years to come, providing a high-quality education for current and future Montessori students.

What is your relevant personal and/or professional experience?

I earned my bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from St. Cloud State University and completed my Montessori training at St. Catherine's University. I am licensed to teach grades K–8. I have been a member of the Swan River Montessori teaching staff since 2005 and have served on the Swan River Montessori School Board for the past 9 years.

What area(s) of expertise and/or contributions do you feel you can make as a board member?

As a member of the Swan River Montessori School Board for the past 9 years, I have completed a variety of trainings to support my role. These include Open Meeting Law, Financial Oversight, Overseeing Student Success, Roles and Responsibilities of School Board Members, Building a School Budget, School Audits, Charter School Employment Law, and additional professional development related to school governance.

Do you have any other volunteer experience?

I currently volunteer at my church, helping to prepare and serve meals for middle and high school students during Youth Group. I also assist with Family Feast, our Community Meal. Additionally, I serve as a 4-H volunteer, helping organize fundraising opportunities for our club, and supporting several livestock programs in Sherburne County.

Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself?

I grew up on a farm in Big Lake. I have been married to my husband, Matthew for 20 years, and we have three children: Noah (19), Daylin (14), and Greyson (7) who all attended Swan River. We live in Big Lake with our two dogs, Georgia and Kimber, our two cats, and 20 chickens.

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Name: Amber Hedberg

Why are you interested in serving as a school board member for SRMCS?

I am interested in serving as a school board member because I care deeply about our students education, well-being and overall success. I believe being on the school board at Swan River will allow me to more positively affect our community and students. Being on the school board will allow me to impact our community through thoughtful leadership and policy decision making.

What is your relevant personal and/or professional experience?

As the RTI and Technology Coordinator, I get to work with a variety of students and staff which allows me to hear staff concerns and see our school from a different angle. Another way I have contibuted was collaborating to review and adjust our MTSS process. I also took the initiative to lead the Continuing Education Committee to help support our staff with CEUs and making relicensure more convenient and affordable.

What area(s) of expertise and/or contributions do you feel you can make as a board member?

As a board member I believe I can contribute with well thoughtout decision making skills. I am confident I can protect the montessori philosphy while also following madatory state wide initiatives and policies. I believe I am a trustworthy person who others can confide in and rely on to do what is best and needed for the majority of students and staff.

Do you have any other volunteer experience?

As a teacher much of my personal time is volunteered to make students learning successful and more engaging. In the past I have volunteered through church programs to help those less fortunate and provided manual labor to help in any way possible.

Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself?

I have worked at Swan River for five years. I have had the unique experience of working with many different students from many different rooms and believe this gives me an advantage in positively effecting change as a school board member.

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Name: Kimberly Dierks

Why are you interested in serving as a school board member for SRMCS?

In my current role, I am able to bring a unique perspective to the school board because I work closely with all students and staff. My daily experience gives me a deep understanding of the academic, social, and emotional challenges many students face. I collaborate regularly with classroom teachers, families, and support staff, which allows me to see how school decisions impact the entire learning community.

What is your relevant personal and/or professional experience?

I wear many hats in our school as a specialist teacher (Art and EE) and as the Math Interventionist. I also spent one year in Special Education teacher. Prior to my time at Swan River, I have worked in both a charter school and public school setting. During this time I taught Art and also spent 3 years as a general education teacher for 2nd and 3rd grade.

What area(s) of expertise and/or contributions do you feel you can make as a board member?

As a board member, I would advocate for practical, student-centered solutions, ensure resources are used effectively to support all learners, and help bridge the gap between policy decisions and what happens in classrooms every day. My goal is to support our school where every student has the opportunity to succeed.

Do you have any other volunteer experience?

My volunteer experience includes extra curricular activities outside of the school setting (ie. soccer coach), I was the Communications Coordinator for four years with Kaleidoscope Charter School's PTO, and I continue to volunteer my time in a variety of ways at Swan River.

Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself?

With my previous experiences and current role, I understand the challenges educators face and the importance of giving staff the tools, time, and support they need to do their jobs well. My time working alongside teachers to problem-solve and support students helps me advocate for practical decisions that benefit both students and staff. I believe this knowledge will assist the board in making the best decisions for our school.

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Name: Rick Freese

Why are you interested in serving as a school board member for SRMCS?

I have been involved with SRMCS since my son, Erik was a student when the school opened 20 years ago. I feel that the dedication by the staff and administration remain focused on the students.

What is your relevant personal and/or professional experience?

I have 34 years of manufacturing and business management. 3 of my immediate family members have over 100 years of experience in teaching, so I have always supported education.

What area(s) of expertise and/or contributions do you feel you can make as a board member?

I have experience in working with financial, administrative and operational aspects of business. Having been involved with SRMCS since its beginning gives me a unique perspective of the school.

Do you have any other volunteer experience?

I volunteered at MN Workforce center helping unemployed individuals during their job search. My son, Erik and I prepared meals for the SRMCS staff during conference nights for a few years prior to having a PTO. I served on the SRMCS Building Company for over a decade.

Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself?

SRMCS provided the necessary education for my son's future and his being a "life long learner" even now as an adult. I will always do what I can to support the school.

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Name: Liz Frink

Why are you interested in serving as a school board member for SRMCS?

My kids will be graduating from SRMC and I want a way to stay connected and involved with the school

What is your relevant personal and/or professional experience?

I am a substitute teacher with Montessori training, and an early childhood educator. I have been teaching since 2010.

What area(s) of expertise and/or contributions do you feel you can make as a board member?

I am passionate about education and particularly the Montessori pedagogy, so I would be passionate to help SRMC continue to bring an authentic Montessori experience for their students and to make it a warm and inviting place for the Monticello and surrounding communities.

Do you have any other volunteer experience?

I have volunteered on the Elk River Food Co-op board for three years in the past. I have also been a facilitator for the Nature Explore Center in Elk River (an outdoor nature classroom) and helped with the certification process for that, as well as managing volunteers to make it flourish. I have also volunteered on various sports teams for my children's sports including basketball, hockey, and dance. Finally,

Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself?

I have a strong education background and lots of experience working with the public and hosting events (over 1000 people) as well as some experience with writing grants. I would be honored to help the SRMC school reach its full potential to provide the students and staff there with an enriching environment. My passion is in teaching the whole child (mind, body, heart) and using nature as the main stage for education.

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Name: Jana Evink

Why are you interested in serving as a school board member for SRMCS?

I feel it is important to be involved in the community and there is nothing more important than our schools. I have truly enjoyed being a board member of the school board for the last 3 years and would love to continue on in another term. I feel I have a lot of talents and ability that are well suited to the tasks necessary to the school board, such as financial oversight and asking deeper questions. With all 3 of my kids currently at Swan River, I have a strong desire to invest my time and talents in the school to continue the success and positive reputation the school has in the community which drew us here in the first place.

What is your relevant personal and/or professional experience?

Current Parent School Board Member for Swan River Montessori Charter School / Financial Committee member

Adjunct Professor of Economics and International Business at University of Northwestern - St. Paul (2012 - present)

Master's of International Business - Hult International Business School (2011)

Business Consulting and Research Assistant work

What area(s) of expertise and/or contributions do you feel you can make as a board member?

I am a critical thinker that seeks a deep understanding of any topic presented and naturally looks at it from the angle of quality control and if that is truly a best practice for that scenario. I am a big fan of continuous improvement and believe that we can always do better. I am a methodical researcher and love how data and statistics are incredible tools to bring insight and reveal areas that need attention. My background in business helps look at things from an organizational standpoint but my role as parent also brings a balanced perspective on the kids and truly wanting to see them succeed and determine what is best to meet their needs. My economics background allows me to closely look at secondary consequences of choices and implementations to assess the long-term effects as well.

Do you have any other volunteer experience?

Current Parent School Board Member for Swan River Montessori Charter School

Activity Director for a day camp in my hometown community for kids K-5th grade

Worked with elementary students at Church for many years

Feed My Starving Children

Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself?

I spent a year living overseas in the Middle East, London, and China, while getting my Master's in International Business and it vastly opened my eyes to truly see the value in looking at things from someone else's perspective. Working in close proximity with people from around the world with cultures far different from my own helped me to be able to see the benefit diversity brings and the humbleness to realize that we can learn something new and beneficial from those who are different than we are. Learning how to work together with people who approach things in a varied manner from each other was an unexpected skill that I'm grateful for and feel has much value especially now in this day and age where everything seems to be divisive and everyone has a differing opinion.

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Name: Annie Felix

Why are you interested in serving as a school board member for SRMCS?

I am interested in serving on the school board because I am deeply committed to strengthening my local community through thoughtful leadership and collaboration. SRMCS has given my daughter an exceptional learning opportunity and I want to give back by providing my skills and experience in service to the school board.

What is your relevant personal and/or professional experience?

B.S. Ecology, Evolution and Behavior, U of MN. 20+ years of leadership experience in state and local government, environmental planning and protection, and community collaboration. Training: The Art of Hosting Conversations that Matter training, 16 hrs. Leadership Development, Group Development, and Civic Engagement Capacity, 36 hrs.

What area(s) of expertise and/or contributions do you feel you can make as a board member?

1) Leadership & Governance: Led statewide programs and managed \$50+ million in public funding each biennium; Developed policies, strategic plans, and operational procedures. 2) Experienced public speaker and facilitator. 3) Strategic Planning & Accountability: Developed and implemented statewide programs with accountability measures; 4) Collaboration & Community Engagement.

Do you have any other volunteer experience?

1) 10 yrs as president and vice president, Elk River Area Food Co-op Start Up Board: Plan and facilitate board meetings; direct board committee outcomes; recruit, hire and train new board members; represent the board in public, and events. 2) Chair of Publicity and Co-chair of Fundraising Committees, Habitat for Humanity Foley Project (non-profit)

Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself?

I understand how to: navigate complex systems, work collaboratively across diverse groups, make decisions that balance mission, data, and stakeholder needs. Most importantly, I am committed to supporting a school environment where every student can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

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Name: Amanda (Mandy) Savchenko

Why are you interested in serving as a school board member for SRMCS?

This is my first year at Swan River as a parent. We plan on school at Swan River for the entire K-6 duration. I have been drawn to be involved more but nothing felt quite right for me as an individual when I looked at PTO and building committee. When I saw the school board position for a parent open up I felt drawn to apply.

What is your relevant personal and/or professional experience?

Not only a parent, I was self employed as a nanny for 20 years. I have now also been in operations HR/Safety/AR/AP for 16 years at an ecological restoration Company locally. My passion for kids, structure that makes sense and the Montessori experience being the only way to school if you can not school at home lends me to be a great fit.

What area(s) of expertise and/or contributions do you feel you can make as a board member?

I am a logic and reasoning prevails type person. It has to makes sense on all fronts to move forward AND fit your mission too. I am easy to talk to, I have a great sense of humor and I get along with a variety of people easily. I have the ability to listen, plan and come to resolution on topics that can makes sense for all involved.

Do you have any other volunteer experience?

I am of the mind set up to have a head down hustle mentality with the attitude of service to others. I have volunteered in a variety of ways over my life, most of it stemming from being raised in a religious household that focused on this weekly if possible. I am no longer serving in that capacity but the mindset is still very present.

Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself?

It would be an honor to be considered for the school board. As a mother, homeschooling was my dream but I must work to financially support my family. The school board would allow me be part of the school in a way I think I would find fulfilling and to be a bigger part of my son's education at Swan River would be a privilege.