

Succession Plan for Spruce Street School

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Succession Plan Policy for Spruce Street School

1 Rationale and Context

As part of its fiduciary duty the Board of Directors must manage risks facing the school. The Head of School position at Spruce Street School is a central element in the organization's success. A planned or unplanned absence in the Head of School position could put the organization at risk. This plan attempts to mitigate that risk. The purpose of this plan is to insure that the organization's leadership has adequate information and a strategy to effectively manage Spruce Street School in the event the Head of School is unable to fulfill his/her duties for any reason.

To mitigate risk, this board policy outlines the functions of the Head of School and ensures their continuation in the event of an absence. This succession planning document outlines a process for Spruce Street School should its Head of School have a temporary absence (whether planned or unplanned). It also outlines an orderly transition process for an unplanned permanent absence.

This document works in conjunction with the Employment Contract for the Head of School (which details certain conditions regarding termination of employment, including planned permanent departures), the Head of School Job Description, and the Crisis Manual (which lays out an understanding of the impact of a critical event on the school community and a blueprint for managing during crisis). The Employment Contract and Head of School Job Description are included as Appendices for reference. As it is lengthy, the Crisis Manual is incorporated by reference only.

This plan reflects Spruce Street School's Head of School Succession Policy at the time of its adoption. Since conditions change, the board should regularly review and update this policy.

2 Framework for Absences

The following grid provides a framework for the potential types of absences for the Head of School at Spruce Street School.

Absences are grouped into four major categories: temporary or permanent, and planned or unplanned. Definitions are listed in parentheses under the major column and row headings.

The grid further divides the temporary absences by their anticipated lengths (quadrants 1 and 2), defining the meaning of each term in number of days. The corresponding section of the board of director’s succession plan is listed in each respective box. Illustrative – though by no means exhaustive - examples of events that might cause the types absences are shown.

		PLANNED (due notice is given)	UNPLANNED (very little or no notice given)
TEMPORARY (assumes Head will return once the event that gave rise to the absence is resolved)	Short Term <=30days	examples include vacation, offsite training Section 5 (specifically 5.2)	examples include medical or family emergency, temporary Section 5 (specifically 5.4)
	Medium Term >30days <90days	examples include short term sabbatical/leave of absence Section 5 (specifically 5.3)	examples include medical or family emergency, short-term Section 5 (specifically 5.4)
	Long Term >90days	examples include long term sabbatical/leave of absence Section 6	examples include medical or family emergency, long-term Section 6
PERMANENT (assumes Head will not return)		examples include planned non-contract renewal, a planned retirement, a planned Head departure with due notice (See Head of School Employment Contract: Appendix A – Section 8)	examples include dismissal with or without cause; death of Head; unexpected departure; Section 7 (Also see Head of School Employment Contract: Appendix A – Section 6 and 7)

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3 Priority Functions of the Head of School at Spruce Street School

The full Head of School position description is attached to this plan (see **Appendix B**). Among the duties listed in the position description, the following are considered to be the key functions of the Head of School and have a corresponding temporary staffing strategy (see Section 5 for further guidance about temporary staffing roles).

Key Head of School Functions	Temporary Staffing Strategy
School Leadership and Vision	Board Chair and Executive Committee
Board Administration and Support	Board Chair and Executive Committee with Assistant Head of School
Admissions and Financial Aid	Treasurer with Assistant Head of School and Business Manager
Financial Management	Treasurer with Assistant Head of School and Business Manager
School Programs	Assistant Head of School
Human Resources Functions	Board Chair with Business Manager
Staffing (Hiring and Firing)	Board Chair and Acting Head of School, under certain circumstances
Plant and Facilities	Board Chair with Assistant Head of School
Community & Public Relations	Board Chair, Communications Committee
Spokesperson	Board Chair, Development Director and Acting (or Assistant) Head of School)
Parent Association Interface	Assistant Head of School

The positions assigned in the Temporary Staffing Strategy are based on Spruce Street School’s organization structure as of May 2012. In the event this plan is implemented and assigned positions are vacant or no longer available, the board Chair shall select other senior staff to support each of the key Head of School functions.

4 Notification and Plan Initiation Process for ALL TEMPORARY Absences

The Board of Directors authorizes the board Chair to implement the terms of this Succession Plan in the event of temporary absences, whether planned or unplanned.

- **Planned:** It is the responsibility of the Head of School to inform the board Chair, or, in the Chair’s absence, another Executive Committee member, of a planned absence of the Head of School, and to plan with board and staff accordingly.
 - The board Chair or, in the Chair’s absence, another Executive Committee member, shall notify the full Board of Directors of the planned absence as soon as possible.
- **Unplanned:** Should the board not be previously notified, it is the responsibility of the Assistant Head of School to immediately inform the board Chair, or, in the Chair’s absence, another Executive Committee member, of an unplanned absence of the Head of School.
 - As soon as feasible, following the notification of an unplanned short- or medium-term absence, the board Chair or, in his or her absence, another Executive Committee member, shall notify the Board of Directors of the unplanned absence and convene an Executive Committee meeting to affirm the procedures prescribed in this plan, or to modify them if needed.

5 Succession Plan for all TEMPORARY Absences OTHER THAN LONG TERM

5.1 Definitions

A **short term absence** is for 30 days or less. The Head of School is expected to return after the event or condition that gave rise to the absence is resolved.

A **medium term absence (planned or unplanned)** is for 30 to 90 days. The Head of School is expected to return after the event or condition that gave rise to the absence is resolved.

An **unplanned absence** is unexpected, such as medical or family emergency. The Head of School is expected to return after the event or condition that gave rise to the absence is resolved.

A **planned absence** is one in which the board and staff are apprised sufficiently in advance to ensure smooth transition of the priority functions of the Head of School.

5.2 PLANNED Short Term Absence Process

All short term vacation absences should comply with the “Vacation Leave” terms in the staff handbook. In addition, for short term vacation absences by the Head of School as allowed under the terms of the Head of School Employment Contract (see Appendix A, Section 11), no notice or special re-assignment of his/her functions is required if school is not in session and the duration of the vacation is two weeks or less.

In all other cases, in the event of a desired, short term temporary absence, the Head of School will seek counsel and assent from the Executive Committee for the absence and the Head of School will designate the Assistant Head of School to be in charge during the Head of School’s absence.

5.3 PLANNED Medium Term Absence Process

In the event the Head of School requests or requires an absence of medium term length, the Head of School will seek permission initially from the Executive Committee.

In the event permission is granted, the Assistant Head of School will assume the responsibilities outlined in Section 3 above.

5.4 UNPLANNED Short Term or Medium Term Absence Process

In the event of an unplanned short- or medium-term absence, the Assistant Head of School may be appointed Acting Head of School by the board Chair as soon as possible.

5.5 Cross Training Plan

To minimize disruptions that may be caused by all temporary absences, the Head of School will develop a training plan for each key function (see Section 3 above) to be carried out by staff during the absence.

5.6 Authority and Restrictions of the Acting Head of School

The Acting Head of School will have full authority for day to day decision making and independent action as the regular Head of School.

Decisions that shall be made in consultation with the board Chair and the Executive Committee include staff hiring and firing, financial issues, and taking on of new projects and public positions on behalf of the school.

The Acting Head of School reports to the board Chair.

The Executive Committee shall meet no less than monthly after the Acting Head of School is appointed.

5.7 Communication Plan for all UNPLANNED Temporary Absences

Within 48 hours of an Acting Head of School being appointed, the board Chair and Acting Head of School will meet to develop a communication plan to include the *kind* of information regarding the Head of School's leave of absence to be communicated and *which* stakeholders require information.

Stakeholders to be considered include staff, students, parents, supporters, alumni, area independent school leadership, Pacific Northwest Association of Independent Schools, and local media.

6 Succession Plan for TEMPORARY ABSENCES – LONG TERM

6.1 Definitions

A **long term absence** is greater than 90 days.

6.2 Long Term Absence Process

The procedures, rules, and conditions that apply to all TEMPORARY absences OTHER THAN LONG TERM (Section 5) shall apply to Long Term Temporary Absences with the following additions.

Additions:

- All *planned* long term absences by the Head of School require initial approval by the Executive Committee and, if granted, subsequent approval by the full board.
- In any event of a long term absence, the board Chair and Executive Committee shall give consideration, in consultation with the Acting Head of School (and in consultation with the Head of School, if it is a planned long term absence), to temporarily filling the Assistant Head of School position, or reassigning responsibilities where needed.

- The board Chair and Executive Committee are responsible for gathering input from staff and reviewing the performance of the Acting Head of School initially within 30 to 45 days and every 90 days thereafter.

6.3 Communications Plan

In the event of a *planned* long term absence the Head of School will notify all relevant stakeholders in advance of the absence.

In the event of a crisis or *unplanned* long term absence, the Crisis Manual (**See Appendix C**) will guide the board's and staff's response, particularly Section II, pages 39-62 and the tasks associated with information delivery to various stakeholders, including the media.

Stakeholder groups to be considered include staff, students, parents, supporters, alumni, area independent school leadership, Pacific Northwest Association of Independent Schools, and local media.

7 Succession Plan for a PERMANENT UNPLANNED Absence

7.1 Definitions

A **permanent unplanned absence** is one where it is firmly determined or decided that the Head of School will not be returning to the position.

7.2 Permanent Unplanned Absence Process

In the event of a dismissal of the Head of School, the board shall follow the terms of the Head of School Employment Contract (see Appendix A) sections 6 and 7 for any termination for cause or without cause.

In the event of a crisis, such as a death to the Head of School, the Crisis Manual shall be consulted, particularly the scenarios in Section II that deal with deaths (accidental, homicide, suicide).

7.2.1 Executive Transition Process

As soon as possible, the Executive Committee shall gather and consider the need to hire an Interim Head of School from outside the school.

At its next board meeting - or sooner if needed - a Transition Committee will be formed. It is anticipated that the Transition Committee will consist of members of the Executive Committee plus additional board volunteers, advisers and school-community leaders as needed.

The transition process will be guided by the available internal candidates for the position of Interim Head of School, the expected time frame needed to hire a permanent Head of School, and the needs of the school at the time of the transition.

The process for hiring an Interim Head of School shall be followed (see Section 7.3).

The process for hiring a permanent Head of School will be developed by the Transition Committee.

7.3 Hiring an Interim Head of School

The board Chair, along with the Transition Committee, shall negotiate terms of an agreement with a defined scope of work for the Interim Head of School.

The scope of work of the Interim Head of School shall be determined based on an assessment of the needs of the school at the time of the transition.

Compensation shall be based on market rates for Interim Heads of Schools and in consultation with staff at the Pacific Northwest Association of Independent Schools and the National Association of Independent Schools.

7.3.1 Responsibilities of the Interim Head of School

An Interim Head of School shall have full authority for day-to-day decision making and independent action as the Head of School.

Decisions that shall be made in consultation with the board Chair and the Transition Committee include staff hiring and firing, financial issues, and taking on of new projects or taking public positions on behalf of the school.

7.3.2 Board Oversight and Support of Interim Head of School

The Interim Head of School reports to board Chair.

The Transition Committee shall be alerted to any special support needs of the Interim Head of School. The Transition Committee shall meet no less than monthly when the Interim Head of School is hired.

The board Chair and Transition Committee are responsible for gathering input from staff and reviewing the performance of the Acting Head of School within 30 to 45 days and every 90 days thereafter.

7.4 Communication Plan

In the event of a permanent unplanned absence involving a crisis, a board spokesperson and a staff spokesperson shall be identified by the Executive Committee. The Crisis Manual (**See Appendix C**, particularly Section II, pages 39-62) will guide the board's and staff's response, and the tasks associated with information delivery to various stakeholders, including the media.

In all other events, a board spokesperson shall be identified by the Executive Committee and the Executive Committee shall develop specific talking points for each stakeholder group, including the media if necessary, and a set of planned messages to be delivered to each group. Stakeholder groups to be considered include staff, parents, students, supporters, alumni, area independent school leadership, Pacific Northwest Association of Independent Schools, and local media.

8 Approvals and maintenance of records

8.1 Succession Plan Approval

8.1.1 Initial Approval

The succession plan shall be approved by a formal resolution by the Board of Directors.

8.1.2 Annual Review

Thereafter, no less than annually, the Executive Committee shall review the plan and recommend any amendments to the full board as needed.

8.1.3 Signatories

The board Chair, the Head of School, and the Assistant Head of School shall sign the plan.

8.2 Record keeping

Copies of this plan shall be maintained by all members of the Board of Directors, Head of School, and Assistant Head of School in accordance with document retention requirements.

8.3 Financial Considerations

It shall be the responsibility of the Executive Committee to review the organization's finances during an unplanned absence of the Head of School. Spruce Street School maintains an operating reserve that the board Chair is authorized to access with Executive Committee approval.

At all times the board Chair and Treasurer and at least one other staff member, in addition to the Head of School, shall have signature authorization for checks and contracts for the organization.

9 Signatures

Head of School: *Bruce Schmitz*

Date: May 17, 2012

Board Chair: *Jennifer Dunca*

Date: May 17, 2012

Assistant Head of School: *Guy Fournier*

Date: May 17, 2012