

Mission & Philosophy Statement

The mission of the Mountain Community School is to create an educational environment where students are inspired to academic excellence and discovery. Teachers, parents, students, and the community will work together to honor individuality and diversity, nurture respect for self and others, and foster a lifelong love of learning. By utilizing a curriculum rich in content, strong in basic skills and relevant to daily life, children will be guided to success. Small class size, strong parental support, teacher autonomy, and a willingness to explore innovative teaching methods are the hallmark of this school. Our goal is to instill a sense of pride and a love of learning in each and every child, through service to school and community.

Notice

TMCS shall comply with all applicable federal laws and regulations, including, but not limited to, such laws and regulations governing employment, environment, disabilities, civil rights, children with special needs, transportation, and student records. The school shall also comply with all applicable health and safety laws and regulations, whether federal, state or local. Neither the State Board of Education nor the Henderson County Board of Public Education (HCBPE) assumes the duty to oversee the operations of TMCS except as may otherwise be provided by law or separate contract. Neither the State Board of Education nor the HCBPE is required to monitor TMCS for compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

Non-Discrimination Statement

The Mountain Community School abides by all North Carolina school enrollment laws. Any child who is qualified under the laws of this State for admission in grades K-8 to a public school is qualified for admission to a charter school. TMCS encourages diversity and does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, economic standing, religion, or disability of the child in its admission policies or education programs.

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY SCHOOL

The Mountain Community School was conceived as an idea in the spring of 1998. A group of parents and educators applied for and received a “charter” from the North Carolina State Board of Education to begin a small kindergarten through 6th grade school. The goal was to offer an alternative public education choice to families in this area. Small class and school size, a commitment to academic excellence and strong parental involvement were the fundamental goals for the school.

Charter schools are deregulated public schools, which means they have greater autonomy and freedom to explore and implement innovative teaching methods, educational models, and new curricula in the classroom. The school operates under the umbrella of The Henderson County Alliance for Education, a non-profit organization whose sole business is The Mountain Community School. We are directly accountable to the State of North Carolina through the State Board of Education and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), which monitors the school’s fiscal responsibility, student tracking, and academic achievement. Academic achievement is evaluated by our End-of-Grade (EOG) scores, which measure both achievement and growth. Our charter was granted for five years beginning with the 1999-2000 school year and continues to cooperate in “good standing” with NCDPI.

The school is governed by a Board that functions under the bylaws of The Henderson County Alliance for Education. Board members are either appointed to a two-year term or appointed by the Board for a one-year term. The Principal of the school serves as an ex-officio member of the Board. As an organization receiving state monies, we are obliged to comply with public meeting laws. The Board meets monthly and at other times at the discretion of the Board. Times of additional Board meetings will be posted along with agendas when available. Minutes of all open session meetings are available on our website. The Board’s responsibility is to guide the operations of the school in a manner consistent with its philosophy and vision, and to generate and approve policies that guide day to day activities at the school in a way that will allow that vision to become reality. Some of the most important Board Policies are reprinted in this handbook; a complete Policy Manual can also be found in the Principal’s office.

A Message from the Board of Directors

Welcome to The Mountain Community School family! If you are a family new to our school, we are glad you have decided to join your child in the educational adventure of a lifetime. We hope that you find the contents of this handbook useful as we begin our unique educational partnership. If you are a returning family, we thank you for your support and commitment to this special program.

The Board of Directors of The Mountain Community School is committed to meeting the goals established during our planning stages, which can be summarized in our hope that children at TMCS will "learn to love to learn". To achieve our goals, we offer small class sizes, high academic standards for all children, and extensive parental involvement. To date, this model has proven highly successful in terms of student achievement, and in the satisfaction of families attending our school.

TMCS offers a unique choice in public education. Your child is among the one percent of public-school students in Henderson County who attend the charter school.

We hope that the experiences you and your child have here will be rewarding and offer growth for all of you. Our Board is always interested in hearing your ideas and suggestions, and the contents of this handbook will show you how to offer the most effective input. We are looking forward to a rewarding partnership in providing the best possible education for your child!

Parental Involvement

The success of TMCS depends on the support and cooperative efforts of parents and teachers. The presence of parents and other volunteers at the school demonstrates the dedication and commitment to education by the individuals in our school community. Parental involvement and investment in TMCS is central to our educational structure and success.

Parents are urged to read and sign a Family Partnership Agreement at the beginning of each school year.

As its contribution to the partnership, TMCS commits to:

- Provide a program of academic excellence which fulfills the goals expressed in our mission statement
- Provide a safe and supportive environment for learning
- Communicate with parents regularly regarding their child's progress and needs
- Promptly notify parents of any disciplinary action necessary regarding their child
- Assist parents in meeting their obligation to their child's educational needs and their responsibility to the school

As their contribution to the partnership, the parents/guardians agree:

- Read and understand TMCS philosophy and policies
- Provide a home environment which nurtures a love of learning
- Help their child with homework and read daily
- Ensure that their child has adequate rest and nutrition
- Participate in school related functions at school and/or in the community
- **Commit three hours per month of service to the school**

Students also have a responsibility in this partnership. As their contribution to the partnership, students agree to:

- Attend school as scheduled and arrive on time, and the event of absence, the student's parent or guardian will directly email their child's teacher regarding their absence.
- Obey the rules and regulations of the school.
- Be courteous, compliant, and respectful to school staff and personnel
- Be respectful and considerate of classmates
- Complete homework assignments in a thorough and timely manner

Teacher/Parent Communication

It is each classroom teacher's responsibility to effectively communicate with their classroom parents. Teachers will inform families of their system of communication at the beginning of the school year. Teachers will use the following methods to keep parent informed of classroom happenings and events:

- Weekly Emails
- Newsletters
- Class Websites
- Class Social Media Page

Teachers will provide preferred contact information at the beginning of the school year. Teachers are supervising students and/or planning instruction during school hours. Please allow teachers (for non-urgent questions) 24 hours/one workday to reply to emails or phone calls. Your child's teacher will make every effort to respond to an urgent parent email or request as soon as time permits. If a parent has an emergency, it is best to call the school office. A parent can request a meeting with their child's teacher at any time throughout the school year.

To meet with a teacher in person, an appointment scheduled in advance is required to ensure the teacher is available to offer a parent their undivided attention. When entering the building parents will enter through the main entrance and stop in the office before going to the classroom.

It is important to note that The TMCS staff is engaged with students throughout the school day as well as during arrival and dismissal times. Please refrain from approaching staff to ask detailed questions or have lengthy conversations when they are supervising students.

CURRICULUM AND PROGRAMS

Instructional Program

The Mountain Community School's instructional program reflects our philosophy that each child deserves the opportunity to pursue academic excellence. By having a curriculum strong in basic skills and relevant to daily life, children are inspired to succeed within their personal framework of aptitude and interest. Coherence of curriculum and integration of topics of study are primary goals. Teachers coordinate the curriculum across grade levels and use teaching methods that accommodate different learning styles. Our children have a sense of ownership of their school and of belonging to a greater community, instilling pride, self-reliance and responsibility, which is essential for developing self-directed, life-long learning skills.

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

Elementary Grades - K through 5

Teachers at the elementary level are dedicated to a single classroom. The following core subject areas are taught by each elementary classroom teacher.

1. Language Arts
2. Mathematics
3. Science
4. History & Geography

Middle School Grades - 6 through 8

Our three middle school teachers share the responsibility for teaching core subjects to students in grades 6-8. Students rotate between the three classrooms to receive instruction in:

1. Language Arts
2. Mathematics
3. History & Geography
4. Science
5. Computer Skills*

*The use of computers is integrated into classroom assignments in all core subject areas.

Learning Through Expeditions - *Learning by Doing, with a particular focus on character growth, teamwork, and reflection.*

Expeditions are cross curricular units of study that engage students while challenging them. Units are integrated into everyday subjects like math, reading, language, science, and social studies with an emphasis on student driven projects and field experience outside the classroom.

Crew

CREW is our program which is focused on community-building strategies that help students develop communication skills, as well as provide opportunities to build compassion and empathy. Students are assigned to groups of 10 or less. Each group is led by a teacher or teacher assistant, "CREW Leader". CREW groups meet every half-day for approximately 90 minutes. They play cooperative games, cook, participate in community service, etc. All activities surround a central theme of communication, cooperation, and problem solving. The CREW program offers each child the opportunity to connect with their peers and their teachers in a different unique environment.

Community Outreach

We recognize the importance of "giving back" to our community. Our Community Outreach program supports many non-profit organizations in our community. Teachers choose an organization to partner with during the school year. The class shows their support through volunteering, fund raising, and helping in ways that support the organization's needs. The Community Outreach Program provides ways for students to make a difference in someone else's life and realize the beauty of selflessness.

Club and Extra Curricular Activities

TMCS offers a variety of after school clubs and extracurricular activities including athletic teams. To support these programs and activities and provide the equipment and materials needed, we ask that parents provide, if able a donation.

It is our main objective to offer our student's a variety of activities so their experience at TMCS can be rewarding as well as fun.

Field Trips

The Mountain Community School recognizes the value of, and encourages the scheduling of, field trips outside the school setting both to build upon the curriculum objectives and to broaden student experiences beyond the classroom. In that regard, all field trips are planned, organized, and supervised with the student's welfare first and foremost.

Field Trip Guidelines

Opportunities exist for parents/guardians to accompany students on field trips. We appreciate and rely on your help for safe transportation and supervision.

If you have signed up to participate as a class chaperone, you will be agreeing to stay with the group and monitor/assure safety of students. While we encourage your involvement and field experiences are exciting, parents must keep in mind that the purpose of field experiences is educational, not recreational. Chaperones will be expected to always remain with the class and should not remove their child from the group for side trips or to leave early. Additionally, chaperones are expected to follow school and grade-level rules, support teachers' behavior guidelines, direct disciplinary needs to school staff, and to treat all children with fair and equal consideration.

Chaperones should arrive at the agreed upon time and park in the front circle to load students. All chaperones should depart from and to school at the same time and go directly between school and the field trip destination without detours or additional stops. Chaperones should meet the teacher at the designated meeting point prior to entering the destination.

Siblings or family pets will not be permitted on trips, so that chaperones can be fully attentive to the students. If a trip should lend itself to involvement of siblings, this will be communicated to parents.

Teachers reserve the right to designate an appropriate number of chaperones for their group and to establish rules specific to the activities of the field experiences. These rules, along with directions and emergency contact numbers, will be communicated to parents in writing in advance of

the trip. As is the case with any classroom activity, teachers will make final decisions on chaperones and trip organization.

Failure to adhere to these guidelines may result in a parent not being allowed to chaperone on future fieldwork experiences. Field trips are a privilege, not a right, and participation is determined at the teachers' and administrators' discretion.

TMCS Media Center

Each class at The Mountain Community School uses the school Media Center on a weekly basis. Books may be checked out for two weeks, with the option to renew a book once for another two-week period. Books not turned in within the two-week checkout period will be assessed a fine of \$.05 each school day they are late, after a one-day grace period; fines do not accrue during weekends or school breaks. Books considered lost must be paid for by the parent/guardian of the student who checked the book out, and their estimated fines (fines that will continue to increase until the book is returned). All overdue books must be turned in and all fines paid by the end of each quarterly grading period.

Art Instruction

TMCS believes that the arts represent an essential component of a student's education. With a subject matter as broad as life itself, the arts easily relate to aspects of almost everything else that is taught. The arts are symbolic of the human condition and help us to understand ourselves. Unlike many other subjects of study, the arts usually do not demand one correct response. Instead of telling students what to think, the arts engage their minds to sort out their own reactions and articulate them through the medium at hand.

Through attaining a basic knowledge of the arts, children are not only better prepared to understand and appreciate works of art, but also able to communicate their ideas, feelings and judgments to others.

Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) Program

The Mountain Community School is committed to meeting the needs of all of our students: to provide the instruction, skills, resources, and services needed in order for every child to be successful and develop their full potential. The vision of our AIG program continues in that vein using research based, data driven information to provide for the challenges, academic rigor, and unique emotional/social needs of our AIG students. Students will be officially identified in third grade with the COGAT test. Students scoring in a high range will be invited to attend AIG at least 4 days

a week for elementary students. The services will continue through middle school, with middle school students being served 1 to 2 days a week, but for a longer class session. Students showing academic rigor that do not perform well on the test, will be considered as Talent Pool students. These students will be recommended by their teachers and may qualify for services through a behavior checklist or work portfolio. Students who have been identified in another school will also be accepted should they transfer to TMCS. Support from AIG will also occur for kindergarten, first grade, and second grade students, if their teacher sees students that are exhibiting giftedness beyond their grade level. These students will be considered a talent pool and could be officially identified in the third grade.

It is the vision and desire of The Mountain Community School AIG plan and program to truly support the NCDPI/AIG moto: AIG ALL DAY EVERYDAY, and to help produce globally engaged and productive citizens.

Physical Education, Health and Sports Programs

Philosophy

A healthy mind and a healthy body are both required for successful learning. Our health curriculum focuses on healthy life-style choices and safety issues which are grade appropriate. Time is allowed in each day for physical activity, both structured and free form (i.e. recess). Children are treated with respect and encouraged to perform to the best of their ability. The goal of the sports and PE program is to foster a belief in “the team concept”.

Extracurricular Sports Program

Middle school students have the opportunity to participate in a competitive sports program, which seeks to improve skills in an atmosphere of fair play and sportsmanship. All middle school students are encouraged to participate in the extracurricular sports program, but must have had a physical within the last year to be eligible. To remain on their team in good standing, athletes must also follow all team rules and maintain academic success throughout the season.

Learning Center Services

The Learning Center provides a full array of support services to students who are enrolled at The Mountain Community School. The primary function of the Learning Center is to provide special education services to those children who qualify for special education and related services, as mandated by the federal government and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Related services include speech therapy, occupational and physical therapy. Children who are identified and placed in programs

for speech-impaired, specific learning disabled, behaviorally and emotionally disabled, educationally disabled (mild to severe), autism, other health impaired, orthopedically impaired, multiply handicapped, visually impaired, and hearing impaired may be eligible for occupational and physical therapy based on evaluation results. A team will be established to develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for eligible students. The team will consist of the child's parents, the LEA, an EC Teacher, and a regular education teacher, and other individuals deemed appropriate to the child's unique needs. This IEP will address his/her individual learning needs as determined by parents and the school-based team for the identified disability and related services. Related services cannot be provided to an individual student until they have an IEP in place.

The model of instruction of the Learning Center is based on the premise that children learn best with their classmates. Pull out services are reserved for those individual students who would benefit most from intensive one on one intervention and/or small group instruction. Most students are served in the classroom with minimal time away from their regular place of instruction. Student who do not qualify for special education services but are exhibiting academic difficulty may also receive support from the Learning Center through the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS Process).

Sunset Club

Sunset club is our after-school program. This program begins immediately following school and remains open until 6:00 pm. Any student not picked up by 3:30 pm automatically will be signed into Sunset club and expected to pay the daily fee; \$10 per day - \$20 per half day. Sunset club does operate on half days but does not operate on days when school is not in session.

POLICIES

Admission and Lottery

Any child who is qualified under the laws of this state for admission to a public school is qualified for admission to The Mountain Community School, provided age and grade requirements are met. Students entering kindergarten must turn five years of age on or before August 31st of the current school year.

Admission shall not be determined according to the school attendance area in which a student resides.

Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, the Board of Directors of The Mountain Community School may refuse to admit any student who is suspended or expelled from a public school until the period of suspension or expulsion has expired. The Henderson County Board of Public Education may refuse to admit any student who is suspended or expelled from TMCS due to actions that would lead to suspension or expulsion from a public school under G.S. 115C-391 until that period of suspension or expulsion has expired.

Spring Enrollment Period

The Open Enrollment Period is the time during which applications will be accepted for student admission for the following school year. Generally, it will begin in January and last at least 6 weeks. In the event that applications exceed available spaces at TMCS, a lottery will be held to determine enrollment and waiting list order.

In accordance with state law, children of the school's principal, teachers, and teaching assistants and school board members may be granted priority for available openings, as may siblings of currently enrolled students. Also siblings of students who have completed the eighth grade and attended TMCS for at least four years will be granted priority for available openings as well.

After openings have been assigned to current students, children of eligible employees and siblings of current students and eligible alumni siblings, the remaining spaces will be made available to the public and all other applicants.

The lottery will be held during the open session of a TMCS Board Meeting. The parents or guardians of the children chosen by lottery for admission to the school will be notified by email of the results of the lottery.

Parents or guardians of the children placed on the waiting list will also be notified by email of their number on the waiting list. *Students on the current year's waiting list must file a separate application during the Open Enrollment Period to be included in the spring lottery for the following year's enrollment.*

Ongoing Enrollment

Parents or guardians interested in enrolling their child at any other time of the year will be asked to submit a waiting list application for each child. A student is not granted a place on the waiting list until a lottery occurs. As with the spring lottery, all lotteries throughout the school year are held during the open session of a TMCS Board Meeting. Parents or guardians will be notified in writing when their child's waiting list position has been established by lottery. When openings become available throughout the year, they will be offered to applicants in accordance with their position on the waiting list.

This waiting list for the current year becomes null and void on the day following the spring lottery for the following school year. Beginning the day following the spring lottery, no new students will be accepted for the current year.

Completion of Enrollment Procedure

For both new and returning students, the enrollment process is not complete until the student has attended and been served by the TMCS at the outset of each new academic year. The Board of Directors for TMCS has stated that *all students must attend school on the first day*. **Any student who does not attend school on the first day will risk losing their space to the next eligible child.** In choosing TMCS for their child, families are expected to adhere to the calendar determined annually by the Principal and the Board of Directors, and to bring their child to school on the days school is in session. However, the Board recognizes that individual circumstances may arise that make accommodation to the calendar difficult or impossible for some families.

Attendance at the beginning of the school year is extremely important. The curriculum utilized by the school is based on an ordered sequence and acquired knowledge. Missing any part of this sequence may interfere with the educational progress we hope to achieve with each child. **In addition, like all other public schools in North Carolina, funding for the entire year is determined by enrollment in the early days of the school year. Our annual budget is based on the assumption of full enrollment from the first day of school.**

- 1. It is imperative that all students attend school on the first day. Students must be in attendance for at least half a day (three hours) in order to be counted as present.**
- 2. Students who do not attend school on the first day will risk losing their space at the school.** If a student does not attend school on the first day, and the principal has not been notified in advance **in writing**, he/she shall have the discretion to reassign that space to the next student on the waiting list. School officials will make every attempt to reach a family whose child is absent.

- A. When an absence is anticipated, whether legal* or illegal, **prior notification of the Principal is required. This notification must be in writing.**
- B. If the absence is not anticipated, **families should contact the school immediately to prevent reassignment of their child's space.**
3. If a student has missed more than the first five full days of school for an legal* absence without notification of the Principal, the Principal will be instructed by the Board of Directors to automatically reassign that student's space to the next student on the waiting list, and **the student will lose their space at the school.**
4. If a student has missed more than the first five full days of school for an illegal absence, **with or without prior notification of the Principal**, the Principal will be instructed by the Board of Directors to automatically reassign that student's space to the next student on the waiting list, and **the student will lose their space at the school.**
5. Even if the student has attended school on the first day, **they cannot be included in the school's head count if they subsequently miss 10 or more consecutive days in the first 20 days of school**, unless these absences are legal*. This is in accordance with the guidelines of the Student Information Management System administered by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. In other words, the state interprets such illegal absences **as if the student is no longer enrolled in the school.**

Student Attendance Policy

Regular attendance at The Mountain Community School is critical to the learning process. As part of their contribution to the Family Partnership Agreement, students agree to attend school on a regular basis unless there are circumstances which necessitate their absence.

Excused Absences

Per North Carolina State Board of Education guidelines, absences must fall into one of the following categories to be considered excused:

- Illness or injury
- Quarantine
- Death in the immediate family
- Medical or dental appointments
- Court or administrative proceedings
- Religious holidays or observances
- Valid educational opportunity with approval prior to the absence

Students absent from school for any of these reasons will be required to provide a note from a parent or guardian stating the need for the absence upon their return to school. When absences are planned in advance, notice is required prior to the absence. Students will be expected to make up work missed within 5 days after an excused absence.

Students with more than 3 consecutive or accumulated absences in a semester may be required by the principal to provide a written excuse from a licensed medical or mental health professional for any further absences. Further absences may be considered unexcused in the event that a written note is not received by the principal in 3 school days.

A student will be considered for homebound status if they are absent for medical reasons for greater than 2 weeks. The need for homebound status must be verified in writing by a medical professional. Students will continue to receive necessary instruction as determined by the principal in the home or hospital setting.

Approval of absences for valid educational opportunities will be determined by the school principal with input from the child's teacher. Students will be expected to keep up with material missed during their absence, and make up work as required by the teacher.

Unexcused Absences

Absences for reasons not listed above, absences not validated with a note from a parent or guardian, or planned absences not approved prior to the absence will be unexcused. State regulations require the school to send a formal warning letter if a student has three unexcused absences;

a second letter is sent requesting a parent conference with the school principal if there are six unexcused absences. At ten unexcused absences, unless some immediate documentation is brought to the school, the principal is required to notify legal authorities that the compulsory attendance law is being violated and a wellness check will be initiated with the local authorities.

Unexcused Tardy

For every seven tardies that a child receives, a parent conference with the school principal will be required. The goal of the conference will be to discuss not only the reasons for your child's excessive late arrivals, but more importantly to devise a plan to ensure your child arrives to school on time in the future.

Excessive Absences

Excused or unexcused absences over 15 are considered excessive and the school will file a case with The Department of Health and Human Services to investigate the family for excessive absences. **If a student reaches a total of 15 or more excused and/or unexcused absences the student may be retained.**

Tardiness/Leaving Early

When a student misses part of a day, the student's parent should sign him/her out in the office log. Any time a student leaves the campus or school event with someone other than his/her parent a note signed by the parent must be given.

For every seven tardies that a child receives, a parent conference with the school principal will be required. The goal of the conference will be to discuss not only the reasons for your child's excessive late arrivals, but more importantly to devise a plan to ensure your child arrives to school on time in the future.

Testing

Evaluation of student progress is accomplished through a variety of means. Individual student projects, quizzes, and unit tests are an integral part of the assessment for students at each grade level. In addition, TMCS utilizes the same NC ABC Accountability Program used to assess student performance in conventional public schools in our state, as mandated by Charter School Law. Students identified as having specific learning needs and who hold active IEP's are not exempt from the NC Testing program. They may qualify for test accommodations, which are provided by the classroom teacher or designee.

The North Carolina Required Testing

Elementary and Middle School

All EOGs and EOC are administered online

Beginning-of-Grade 3 (BOG3) Reading Test

- The BOG3 Reading Test is aligned to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCS) for grade 3 English language arts.
- The purpose of the test is to establish a baseline measure of beginning third grade students' reading skills.
- Students read authentic selections and then answer questions related to the selections.
- Knowledge of vocabulary is assessed indirectly through application and understanding of terms within the context of the selections and questions.
- All test questions are multiple-choice.
- The BOG3 testing window begins on the eleventh day of the school year and continues through the fifteenth day.

End-of-Grade (EOG) Tests

Reading

- The EOG reading tests are aligned to the NCSCS for English language arts.
- Students read authentic selections and then answer questions related to the selections.
- Knowledge of vocabulary is assessed indirectly through application and understanding of terms within the context of the selections and questions.
- All test questions are multiple-choice.
- The EOG reading tests at grades 6–8 are required to be administered online. Exceptions to this rule are for approved technology hardship

requests or for students with disabilities who have documented accommodations that dictate a paper test format is necessary for accessibility.

- The EOG testing window is the last ten days of the school year.

Mathematics

- The EOG mathematics tests are aligned to the NCSCS for mathematics.
- The EOG mathematics tests consist of two parts: calculator inactive and calculator active.

Students are not allowed to use calculators during the calculator inactive part of the test;

students are allowed to use calculators during the calculator active part of the test.

- The EOG mathematics tests at grades 3 and 4 contain multiple-choice questions.
- The online EOG tests at grades 5–8 contain multiple-choice and numeric entry questions.
- The EOG Mathematics Tests at grades 4–8 are required to be administered online. Exceptions to this rule are for approved technology hardship requests or for students with disabilities who have documented accommodations that dictate a paper test format is necessary for accessibility.
- The EOG testing window is the last ten days of the school year.

Science

- The EOG science tests at Grades 5 and 8 are aligned to the North Carolina Essential Standards for Science.
- The EOG science tests are required to be administered online. Exceptions to this rule are for approved technology hardship requests or for students with disabilities who have documented accommodations that dictate a paper test format is necessary for accessibility.
- The online EOG science tests contain multiple-choice and technology-enhanced questions.
- The paper EOG tests contain multiple-choice questions only.
- The EOG testing window is the final ten instructional days of the school year.

End-of-Course (EOC) Tests

- EOC tests are currently given for NC Math 1 students. Students enrolled in

this course are required take the appropriate EOC (Math 1) test at the completion of the course.

- The online NC Math 1 test contains multiple-choice questions, numeric entry questions, and technology-enhanced questions.
- The NC Math 1 test consists of two parts: calculator inactive and calculator active. Students may use a calculator only for the calculator active part of the test.

Student Promotion Requirements

The Mountain Community School Board recognizes that the educational, social, and emotional growth of children will vary and that each child should be placed in the educational setting most appropriate to their needs at their various stages of growth.

It shall be the policy of the Board that each child be moved forward to the next grade in a continuous pattern of achievement and growth that is in harmony with his or her own development.

A student will be promoted to the succeeding grade level when he or she has:

- Successfully completed the course requirements at the present grade level.
- Demonstrated proficiency to move ahead to the educational program of the next level.
- Demonstrated the degree of social and emotional maturity necessary for a successful learning experience at the next level.

Students will be assessed based on a balanced system of assessment consisting of multiple components that help to measure and track student progress and development:

- Standardized Assessments in Reading and Math
- North Carolina End of Grade Assessment
- Performance Based Assessment
- Teacher derived authentic assessment
- Student attendance is also taken into consideration in regards to promotion

Grievance Procedures

Constructive criticism motivated by a sincere desire to improve the quality of the educational experience of our children is welcomed. Parents, students, staff, and community members are encouraged to attend regular board meetings and consult with the school principal and teachers to address any desires or needs. Each request will be given consideration, and decisions will be made in the best interest of the students of The Mountain Community School.

Complaints and grievances are best handled and resolved as close to their origin as possible in a timely manner. Therefore, the proper channeling of complaints involving instruction, discipline, or teaching methods and materials will be as follows:

1. Teacher
2. Principal
3. Board of Directors

When an individual wishes to appeal a decision of school personnel, the appeal must be in writing, and must state the decision which the individual wishes to appeal. The appeal must be addressed to the president of the Board of Directors. The issue will be addressed by the Board of Directors, or a committee appointed by the Board of Directors in a closed session meeting with all involved parties.

Dispute Resolution for the Exceptional Children (EC) Program

Concerns for the education of students with special needs can be addressed by adhering to the **Grievance Procedure**. If the concerns are not resolved with satisfaction or a parent wants EC dispute resolution information; the information can be found on the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction- EC Division's website at the following link:

<http://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/parent-resources/dispute-resolution/dispute-resolution>

Volunteers and Confidentiality

Volunteers are integral to the structure of TMCS. Teachers, staff, and administrators may utilize their assistance in any manner which does not conflict with student, family, or employee confidentiality, and promotes the well-being of the school and community. If a question arises with regard to the suitability of volunteer activities, the Principal has discretion. Volunteer activities may include:

- Formation of volunteer organizations and committees as requested by the Principal, Board, or group of parents
- Completion of regular duties, such as lawn care, to reduce expenses and make more funds available for educational support
- Assistance of teachers and staff in classroom or secretarial duties
- Presentation based on personal experiences for curricular supplementation
- Field trip planning and supervision
- Club organization and activities
- Community service projects
- Appointment to the Board of Directors

Volunteers must be of sound moral character. Individuals may not volunteer if they have been convicted of a crime which involved violence, moral turpitude, or crimes against a child or children. Students who have been expelled or are suspended from any educational institution may not volunteer. All volunteers are subject to approval by the Principal and a national background check.

Volunteers are not entitled to payment for any serviced rendered. Prior approval by the Principal is required for reimbursement of materials purchased by a volunteer.

Volunteers are exposed daily to confidential information. Such information is shared on a need-to-know basis as it is necessary to benefit the individual, class, or school.

Keeping appropriate information confidential is required of all volunteers, and they are required to sign a confidentiality statement.

Safety

Safe Equipment Use

All equipment will be used in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations. A copy of manufacturers operating instructions will be posted by the equipment and or will be on file in the office. Any equipment that poses a potential hazard may only be operated by staff or volunteers who have had appropriate instruction. The principal shall designate the appropriate trainer.

Traffic Safety

It is the duty of the Principal to develop a traffic plan, which shall insure the safety of everyone in the school community. All staff members shall be instructed on correct rules and procedures. Staff shall be designated to be on duty in the mornings and afternoons.

Bomb Threat

Every bomb threat will be viewed as being a real emergency.

- No drills. Principal and designee will check sports field.
- An all-call will be made to each classroom. (Each classroom and workroom will be informed by the principal or designee).
- The entire school will evacuate to the sports-field.
- Teachers will count students.
- 911 will be called using a land-line. (No cell-phones will be used)
- All gates will be unlocked.
- Students will be evacuated to Jackson Park ball fields.

Intruders

All visitors, parents, and volunteers should sign in at the main office where they will be issued an identification tag.

*Each situation will be different

In the event someone presents a perceived danger to the school community, the following procedures shall be followed.

- Staff member will move children to safety.
- Principal or designee will be notified.
- Principal or designee will determine if 911 should be contacted
- All-call will be made to inform classrooms of the appropriate action i.e. lock down or remove students (each classroom will also be informed by a staff member)

*Fail-safe Card

Each teacher will have a colored card with his or her name on it. Should the teacher or staff-member feel that an emergency exists, he or she will send the card to the office. Upon receiving the card the principal or designee will immediately go to that teacher's classroom.

Emergency School Closing

TMCS will take every precaution possible to ensure the safety of its school community. The principal or designee shall have the authority to close the school in the event of an emergency or any condition, which threatens the health or safety of the students or school personnel.

In the case of an emergency, which requires the closing of school, parents will be notified as soon as possible through the appropriate media. The

principal in the event of a school closing shall notify the school board.

Building Security

The principal shall appoint a committee to make recommendations concerning overall security and the maintenance of a safe school environment.

The principal shall make regular inspections of all facilities and have corrected any unsafe conditions.

The principal shall issue keys to appropriate staff members and be responsible for those keys being returned upon demand. A log shall be maintained recording who has been issued keys.

Building Use Policy

The principal shall have the authority to rent the facilities of TMCS:

There will be a cleanup fee set by the board. A staff member or custodian will be compensated at an hourly rate as determined by the board for opening the building and securing it after its use.

Medication Administration

The classroom teacher or other trained staff member will administer prescribed medication to a student with both parent authorization and physician order submitted on the Request for Medication Administration Form. A separate form is applicable for over the counter (OTC) medications such as Tylenol or Ibuprofen. Please complete the Authorization for Administration of Over the Counter Medication if you anticipate your student needing occasional use of such medication. If an OTC is to be given routinely for more than one week, a physician order is required. Parent and student responsibilities are noted on the back (pg2) of the Request for Medication Administration form and must be followed.

Discipline

The Mountain Community School is committed to providing a quality education for children within a safe and orderly atmosphere. In order for the school to satisfactorily meet the needs of students, there must exist a climate of discipline conducive to respect for oneself, other people, and property. A well-disciplined school is a necessary component of a positive learning environment because it:

- Offers the same set of rules for everyone
- Provides equal application of all rules
- Fosters responsible students
- Promotes a safe and comfortable environment
- Has a friendly and cooperative atmosphere
- Provides opportunities to participate
- Offers a real chance for success

Students in a positive educational climate are expected to be good citizens,

demonstrating through speech and action, a respect for others and self. As such, it is our hope that our exclusion/expulsion policy will never need implementation.

Behavioral Expectations

- Students are expected to be courteous and respectful to school staff and personnel.
- Students are expected to be respectful and considerate of classmates.
- Students are expected to always obey the rules and regulations of the school, as outlined below.

These rules apply during all school-sponsored activities before, during or after regular school hours, on or off campus, in school vehicles, or vehicles being used in school-related functions.

Unacceptable Behaviors

1. Cutting class, leaving school grounds without permission: truancy

No student shall leave the school grounds during regular school hours without prior permission from school authorities. A student who is between the ages of 6 and 16 years of age is required by the State Compulsory Attendance Law to attend school "No person shall encourage, entice or counsel any child to be unlawfully absent from school." (G.S. 115C-378)

2. Hazing

- No group or individual shall require any student to wear demeaning dress or costume on campus; injure emotionally or physically another student by playing abusive tricks on him/her, frighten, scold, beat or harass him/her or subject him/her to personal indignity or extort money or other things of value from him/her.

3. Smoking or use of tobacco or tobacco products

- Students are prohibited from possessing or using any tobacco product including cigarettes, electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) or other vaping devices whether nicotine or non-nicotine based, cigars, chewing tobacco, snuff and any other items containing or reasonably resembling tobacco or tobacco products. Students are prohibited from possessing or using any paraphernalia associated with tobacco or vaping use including pipes, rolling papers, e-cigarette "juices" or their cartridges, lighters, and matches. NC Senate Bill 530/SL 2013-165 defines e-cigarettes and associated products as "tobacco products."

4. Vandalism, writing on walls (graffiti), theft, defacing, damage, destruction, or arson to school buildings or other school property

- No student shall willfully damage, deface, mar or destroy any building, school vehicle, property, grounds, supply, furnishings, or equipment, belonging to the school.

5. A purposeful act intended to disrupt school

- No student shall purposely disrupt the lawful function of the school or its special activities, events, trips or performances.
- In the classroom, no student shall unreasonably impair the teaching or learning process.
- No student shall engage in behavior that is detrimental to the progress, function or purpose of any school activity or event or infringe on the rights of other students, faculty, spectators, or public.

6. Reckless or belligerent behavior which might result in bodily harm

- No student shall engage in any behavior which is so careless, wanton, reckless or belligerent that it could result in bodily harm to himself or others

7. Theft or damage to private property

- No student shall damage or steal any property while participating in any school sponsored activity, or while riding in a school vehicle, or vehicle being used for school-related purposes.

8. Breaking and entering a school building, trespassing on school property

- No student shall enter a school building after school hours unless an official school activity is being held and/or school officials have authorized such entry.

9. Inciting a riot or disturbance; encouraging others to disrupt school

- No student shall engage in riotous, insubordinate conduct that causes, or is intended to cause a disturbance or disruption to the normal operation of school and its various school day activities, or any other school-sponsored activity.

10. Assault on another student or fighting

- No student shall assault, cause, or attempt to cause, bodily harm, threaten, fight, intimidate or harass another student.

11. Assault or violence directed toward any school employee or volunteer

- No student shall assault, cause bodily harm to or threaten any school employee or volunteer. Assault can include threatening language, signs, or gestures. Any student at least 13 years of age who physically assaults teacher or other school personnel shall be removed to an alternative educational setting. If no appropriate setting is available, the board may suspend the student for up to 365 days. If the teacher or personnel is seriously injured the board shall suspend the student for no less but no more than 365 days.

12. Bomb threat or hoax

- No student shall, by any means of communication make a report, knowing or having reason to know, the report is false, that there is located on any school premises a device designed to cause damage or destruction by explosion, blasting, or burning.

- No student shall place on any school premises with the intent of perpetrating a hoax, any device which would appear to a reasonable person to be a bomb or similar instrument capable of causing injury or damage.

13. Possession, sale, exchange, use, or being under the influence of any illegal drug, counterfeit drug, or alcohol on school grounds, or in any private vehicles on school grounds, or at any school function, wherever held.

- No student shall possess, use, transmit, or be under the influence of any drug or drug paraphernalia defined as a controlled substance (pursuant to Chapter 90 of the General Statutes) or alcohol while in any school building, on any school premises, at any school function or event before, during or after school hours, or during any period of time when the student is subject to the authority of school personnel unless such possession, use, or transmission is authorized by law and school regulations or unless prescribed by and taken in accordance with the prescription of a physician.

14. Possession or use of a weapon, incendiary, or explosives (This includes guns, knives, and firecrackers) or use of any object as a weapon to cause bodily harm or injury

- No student shall possess, handle, transmit, manufacture, or use any weapon on any school grounds or on any school vehicle, or vehicle being used for school-related purposes.
- As outlined in G.S. 115C-391(d1), violation of this policy may result in suspension for up to 365 days. The Board of Directors may modify this suspension requirement on a case-by-case basis that includes, but is not limited to, the procedures established for the discipline of students with disabilities and may also provide, or contract for the provision of, educational services to any student suspended pursuant to this subsection in an alternative school setting or in another setting that provides educational and other services.

15. Sexual Harassment/Sexual Offenses

- No student shall engage in any type of behavior that is verbally or physically abusive in a sexual nature. This includes inappropriate touching, intentional exposure of body parts, including “mooning”, sexual activity or attempted sexual activity by force, threat, or fear. Any persons aware of situations involving sexual harassment shall report the incident to the principal.

Guidelines for Disciplinary Action

Teachers will be urged to encourage student self-discipline and to involve parents in student-related problem solving. In the event that differences cannot be resolved at the classroom level, or violations of student behavior guidelines are observed, they will be referred to the principal, and if necessary, to the Board of Directors.

Violation of student behavior guidelines may result in a short-term in-

school suspension, a short-term out-of-school suspension, a long-term suspension, or expulsion. The type and length of suspension will depend upon the severity of the violation, the circumstances of the situation, and the professional judgment of the Principal and/or the Board of Directors. Other administrative actions may be contemplated in addition to suspension. The Mountain Community School will adhere to federal and state guidelines in all decisions regarding student suspension or expulsion.

The Principal will investigate any incident of violation of student behavior guidelines, hearing all versions of the facts. The student will be allowed to hear the charges and evidence against him/her and present their version of the incident. The Principal will advise the student and his/her parents if a suspension is invoked, clearly informing them why the student is being suspended from school and for how long.

Any student suspended out-of-school is to remain off school grounds during the suspension period. Students are not to attend any athletic contests or extracurricular student activities during this suspension period.

Suspension days apply only to days when school is in session for students. Teacher workdays, weekends, holidays, and school days dismissed for weather do not count toward the completion of a suspension assignment.

Short-Term In-School Suspension

The Principal may invoke a short-term in school suspension for a period of up to ten days for students who willingly violate the student behavior guidelines. Class assignments and tests will be provided to the student to complete during the in-school suspension.

Short-Term Suspension (1-10 DAYS)

A "short-term suspension" is a suspension from school for 1-10 school days. This is a serious disciplinary action.

The Principal of The Mountain Community School, or his/her delegate, shall have the authority to suspend for a period of 10 days or less any student who willfully violates policies of conduct established by the Board of Directors: Provided, that a student suspended in this manner be provided an opportunity to take any quarterly, semester or grading period examinations missed during the suspension period (Ref. G.S. 115C-391(b)).

Long-Term Suspension (More than 10 days)

A "long-term suspension" is a suspension from school for more than 10 school days. This is a serious disciplinary action and can extend through the end of the school year. Obviously, grades and course credit can be adversely affected.

The Principal of The Mountain Community School, with the prior approval of the of the Board of Directors, shall have the authority to suspend for periods of time in excess of 10 school days but not exceeding the time

remaining in the school year, any pupil who willfully violates the policies of conduct established by the Board of Directors. The pupil and his/her parents may appeal the decision of the Principal *and* the Board of Directors. [Ref. G.S. 115C-391(c)]

The Principal will advise the student and his/her parents in writing by certified mail as to the nature of the incident(s) and the charges against the student which justify a long-term suspension. The parents will be informed in the written notice that within three days after notification they may request a hearing, wherein charges will be considered by an impartial hearing panel. In the notice the parents will be informed of the procedures and their rights. At the conclusion of the hearing, the panel will recommend to the Board of Directors, on the basis of the evidence offered, if the punishment should be upheld or denied. The Board of Directors will notify the student and parents of their decision in writing.

The decision of the hearing panel may be appealed to the Superior Court.

Expulsion

An expulsion is the permanent exclusion of a student from school. The Board of Directors has the authority to expel a student from school with the recommendation from the principal. Other alternative education methods will be considered before an expulsion is decided upon. The expelled student is permanently prohibited from returning to the school unless the Board of Directors reverses its decision. A student may apply for readmission, but not before July 1st, that is at least 6 months after the expulsion date. The same due process procedures as a long-term suspension apply except the student may appeal the original decision to North Carolina Superior Court within thirty days.

A student may be expelled only if: (1) the student is at least 14 years of age and (2) the continued presence of the student in school constitutes a clear threat to the safety and health of other students or school employees.

Any student suspended or expelled from school is to remain off school grounds for the duration of the expulsion period. Students may not attend any athletic contests or extracurricular student activities during this expulsion period.

Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, the Board of Directors of the Mountain Community School may refuse to admit any student who is suspended or expelled from a public school under G.S. 115C-391 until the period of suspension or expulsion has expired.

Corporal Punishment

The Mountain Community School will not endorse nor allow the use of corporal punishment as a form of disciplinary action. However, in accordance with G.S. 115C-391(a), school personnel may use reasonable force to control behavior or to remove a student from the scene in those situations when necessary:

1. To quell a disturbance threatening injury to others.
2. To obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects on the person, or within the control of a student.
3. For self-defense.
4. For the protection of persons or property; or
5. To maintain order on school property, in the classroom, or at a school-related activity on or off school property.

Disciplinary Suspension of a Special Needs Student [Ref. G.S. 115C-112, Amended Eff. 1/1/83]

Rules Governing Short-Term (1-10 days) Suspension

A multidisciplinary team meeting is not required for a suspension of less than 10 days (unless a short-term suspension will bring the total time suspended during that school year to more than 10 days). Standard procedures are followed when a short-term suspension is invoked.

Rules Governing Long-Term Suspension

In the event that a student with special needs exhibits behavior which, if the child were not a child with special needs, could result in the suspension or expulsion of the student from school for more than 10 days during the school year, the Board of Directors shall require a multidisciplinary team promptly to review the evaluation already completed for the student and conduct any additional evaluations necessary to determine if the behavior is caused by the student's special needs.

If the evaluation establishes no such relationship between the behavior and the special needs, the Principal and Board of Directors may initiate normal disciplinary procedures, provided that the student with the disability must continue to receive a free appropriate public education.

If the student with a disability is suspended or expelled, the Board of Directors must provide or arrange for the provision of a free appropriate public education in an alternative setting.

If the evaluation does establish such a relationship, the Principal and the Board of Directors may not initiate their normal disciplinary procedures but should determine an appropriate program.

In an emergency situation, the student may be immediately suspended for a period not to exceed 10 days. As soon as possible after the suspension has begun, and in no case beyond the end of the 10-day maximum period, except under extraordinary circumstances, the multidisciplinary team shall conduct the evaluation described above in subsection (1). To continue an emergency situation, there must be a continuing threat to the child or to others due to the child's behavior.

In all actions involving suspension of a special needs child whose behavior is determined not to be caused by his/her handicapping condition or lack of proper medication, the parties have available all the due process of G.S. 115C-112, 116, and 20 U.S.C. 1415

When a special needs student consistently demonstrates problematic behavior that could result in disciplinary suspensions, the multidisciplinary team should meet to review the IEP and consider adding or changing behavior goals and appropriate consequences for inappropriate behavior. In the event a special needs student accumulates 10 days of suspension, the Principal must immediately initiate the school-based multidisciplinary committee meeting. No other suspension may be imposed until this meeting is held. In-school suspension should be treated the same as any other suspension, and the procedures outlined in Section .1523 of "Procedures Governing Programs and Services for Children with Special Needs, 1990" will apply. The only possible exception is in those few instances when in-school suspension is listed on the IEP as a behavior management strategy.

The Board of Directors has no duty to provide a child with special needs any special education or related services during a period of expulsion if the expulsion was pursuant to G.S. 115C-391(d), a convicted felon, 14 years of age or older.

Any special needs student suspended out-of-school is to remain off school grounds for the duration of the suspension or expulsion period. Students are not to attend any athletic contests or any extracurricular student activities during this out-of-school suspension

Dress Code Policy

1. Shorts and skirts will be no shorter than fingertip level when arms are at sides.
2. No shirts or tops are to be worn which show the midriff.
3. No profanity, offensive material, or political messages will be displayed on any article of clothing.
4. No tank tops or spaghetti straps are allowed.
5. All shorts and pants must be worn around the waist. If oversized pants are worn, a belt must be used to keep clothing in proper place.
6. No hoods on hoodies are to be worn inside the building.
7. Hats should be removed during the Pledge of Allegiance.

Cell Phone Policy

Students are allowed to have cell phones at school, but the phones must be turned off and kept out of sight. Students bring these devices to school at their own risk. The TMCS faculty and staff are not responsible for any damaged, missing, or stolen cell phones. Should a student need to make a phone call while at school, they must receive permission from a TMCS staff member and will be directed to use the phone in a classroom or in the main office. Parents who need to contact a student should call the main office. Students will not be allowed to answer calls or check messages on a cell phone during the school day. Cell phone use by students is prohibited at school without express permission for specific use of function or feature from a school staff member, including during lunch, exercise breaks, before and after school, at Sunset (after care program) and on field trips. Use is interpreted not just as the sending or receiving of calls. Use includes using any cell phone function or feature, including but not limited to texting, photography, recording, internet access, social media, music playing, etc. These restrictions apply to use in hallways, restrooms, offices, the outside or any other place on campus or on a field trip. Campus restrictions are in effect before school from initial drop off time and after school through dismissal procedures. Cameras, as part of other devices or as a single purpose device, are prohibited at TMCS without express permission for specific use of function or feature from a school staff member. This restriction follows the same guidelines as that for cell phones.

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