

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 hallmarks 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 a deregulated public school, 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 enroll 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, arrive on time, and in 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 may choose from 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 sign in using the Ident-a-kid system found in the lobby 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.

Social Media

The school has a Facebook and Instagram social media presence. Many school events and happenings are posted every day. Individual classrooms also host Facebook pages. These pages are to inform parents of classroom events and to serve as a positive forum for parent communication.

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 students 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. **All Chaperones MUST complete a Chaperone Agreement Form and sign in through the Ident-a-Kid system in the main lobby for EVERY FIELD TRIP.**

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).

Visiting on Campus During the School Day

We welcome parents to visit their child's class for a presentation or on occasion during their child's lunch time. When visiting please stop in the office first to sign the visitors log and receive a visitors' badge. Please respect the privacy of all students and do not take pictures or videos of other students while visiting a class or on the playground.

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.

All unpaid balances must be taken care of by the end of each month or the student will not be able to attend until resolved.

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 December 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, 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 Spring each year. 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. The lottery is 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 a legal* absence without notification of the Principal and documentation provided, 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.**

*Legal absences include Medical/Illness with a doctor's note, loss of a family member, and Educational Opportunities that have been approved in advance by the Principal.

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 services 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 manufacturer's 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.

- Principal and designee will check outside playground areas
- An all-call will be made to each classroom. (Each classroom and workroom will be informed by the principal or designee)

- 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)

Each teacher has a classroom radio and will request immediate assistance in case of emergency.

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 channels. 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 Dispensing

The class teacher will dispense prescribed medication to students. The Prescription Medication Form will be completed by the parent and child's physician and returned to the school office.

The Code of Student Conduct

The purpose of the code of student conduct is four-fold:

1. To illustrate expected student behaviors
2. To describe violations of the Student Code of Conduct and associated interventions and consequences that may be enforced
3. To outline student rights, privileges and responsibilities
4. To provide information about how to get help from school personnel

Equally important to sharing what is expected of students is that TMCS policies and practices support social emotional learning and positive behavior choices. Developing positive and effective student behaviors requires collaborative efforts from school, home, and community organizations and agencies.

Expected Student Behavior

We believe everyone deserves a safe, supportive, and orderly learning environment. We encourage appropriate behaviors by teaching, guiding, directing, and providing opportunities for new learning to occur. We create opportunities for students to practice and succeed in making responsible and effective choices in order to reach their social, emotional, and academic potential and contribute to the school community. Our mission is to empower learners to change the world.

The Code of Student Conduct shall apply to all students at all times on all school grounds, public spaces, vehicles, field experiences, and school events.

I will maintain a positive relationship with myself by:

- Attending school regularly and being on time
- Following rules and directions of adults
- Doing my schoolwork and homework with craftsmanship
- Practicing positive behavior choices
- Remaining within my designated school area/classroom unless I have permission to leave my assigned area
- Learning from the consequences of my behavior
- Choosing not to bring tobacco (nicotine containing products), vaping products, alcohol, other drugs or weapons to school
- Adhering to the school's dress code

I will maintain a positive relationship with others by:

- Being understanding of others feelings

- Being focused and not distracting myself or others, so as not to disrupt the learning environment.
- Using positive words with others (no put downs)
- Treating others like I want to be treated
- Being a good role model for my peers and the younger students within our community.
- Being an upstander for others and not bullying or threatening
- Being honest by telling the truth, and taking responsibility
- Working with others in a positive and inclusive way
- Keeping my hands and body to myself
- Using appropriate language at school
- Working with others to manage negative behaviors and emotions
- Using a respectful, positive, and considerate tone of voice and body language when I am speaking to others
- Practicing Whole body listening when others are speaking

I maintain a positive relationship with my school environment by:

- Taking care of things in my school and on school grounds
- Not bringing dangerous or distracting things, such as matches, lighters, toys other than when allowed, fireworks, alcohol/tobacco (nicotine containing products)/other drugs,vape products, medicine not prescribed for me, etc.
- Using school materials or classmate’s materials for their intended purpose
- Using computers as directed by adults (see Acceptable Use Policy)
- Conduct myself in a safe and considerate way that reflects a positive image
- Leaving spaces as they were or better: clean up and participate positively in cleaning tasks
- Not defacing, removing, digging, destroying or disturbing the features of private and public spaces

Levels of Interventions and Consequences for Violations of the Code of Student Conduct

As with any incident of student behavior, school administrators must exercise informed judgment as to whether a student’s actions constitute a violation of the school policies and/or the Code of Student Conduct. The levels, shown on the following page, guide administrators to use *progressive interventions* to impact student behaviors. The principal will use their discretion and apply interventions and consequences appropriate to the situation. Restitution for loss or damage could be required in addition to any other prescribed consequences.

The following chart is intended as a guide to determine appropriate consequences. **Repeated chronic or cumulative offenses may require higher levels of intervention/consequences.** For serious violations, interventions/consequences may begin at a higher level and/or be reported to local law enforcement agencies. Incidents involving suspected harm of a child may be reported to Child Protective Services.

Levels of Consequences

Level	Intervention Options
<p>1- Teacher managed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Redirection and reteaching expected behaviors ● Reinforcement of appropriate behaviors ● Mentoring ● Warning ● Teacher conference with student ● Letter of apology ● Student email to parent ● In-class time-out (take a break) ● Loss of privileges ● Time out in another classroom setting ● Use of Student reflection/problem-solving worksheet ● Confiscation of item by teacher ● Seat change ● Working Lunch/Lunch Detention (Away from peers)
<p>2- Teacher Managed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parent/guardian notification required ● Conflict resolution ● Referral for peer mediation with counselor ● Teacher and/or administrator conference with student and/or parent ● Conference with parent/guardian ● Parent or guardian accompany student on field experience ● Behavior Contract ● Community service assignment, as a form or restitution ● Confiscation of item (pick up in office) ● Supervised time-out outside of classroom ● Monitored/Limited transitions ● Working Lunch/Lunch Detention (Away from peers)

<p>3- Administrator Managed (considered an office referral)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parent/guardian notification required ● Parent or guardian accompany student ● Reteaching expected behaviors ● Conflict resolution ● Referral for peer mediation with counselor ● Restricted Activity or Use of Technology ● Community service assignment, as a form or restitution ● Suspension (1-5 days)
<p>4-Administrator Managed (office referral)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parent/guardian notification required ● Restricted activity ● Restricted use of technology ● Modified school day ● Suspension (5-10 days)
<p>5-Administrator Managed (office referral)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parent/guardian notification required ● Extended Suspension (10 days+)
<p>6- Administrator Managed (office referral)</p>	<p>Expulsion (to be considered only in the most extreme cases, which could be a single incident or multiple repeated violations of school policy and behavior codes.). More serious offenses may result in recommendation for expulsion following due-process procedures.</p>

Definitions for Problem Behavior and Consequences for Students

<p>Offense/Violation</p>

Assault on a Student

Level: 3, 4, 5, 6

Definition:

Causing or attempting to cause physical injury to another student. For the purposes of this policy serious physical injury shall refer to any significant or aggravated bodily injury, including but not limited to broken bone(s), loss or chipping of teeth, loss or impairment of vision, loss of consciousness, internal injuries, scarring or other disfigurement, significant bleeding, lacerations resulting in sutures, significant bruising, severe or prolonged pain, any injury requiring hospitalization for any period of time, and/or any injury resulting in medical treatment beyond simple first aid procedures.

Assault on School Personnel of Other Adult

Level: 3, 4, 5, 6

Definition:

Causing or attempting to cause physical injury to any school employee or other adult while on school premises or field trips.

Filming an Assault or Inappropriate Act

Level: 3, 4, 5, 6

Students who record video of any physical altercations or other inappropriate acts at school or at school events will have their phones confiscated and could face disciplinary consequences including suspension. Any student who refuses to disperse while witnessing an incident is subject to suspension. Any student who chooses to be a bystander and not an upstander may be subject to suspension.

Bullying/Harassment

Level: 3, 4, 5, 6

Definition:

Any repeated, systematic pattern of gestures or written, electronic, or verbal communications, or any physical act or any threatening communication on school property; or at any school sponsored function that places a student or school employee in actual and reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property; or creates or is certain to create a hostile environment by substantially interfering with or impairing a student's educational performance, opportunities, or benefits. A hostile environment means that the victim subjectively views the conduct as bullying or harassing behavior and the conduct is objectively severe or pervasive enough that a reasonable person would agree that it is bullying or harassing behavior.

Harassing or bullying behavior includes, but is not limited to, acts reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, socioeconomic status, academic status, gender identity, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics (additional information regarding this policy can be found in the Student Code of Conduct).

Destruction of Property/ Vandalism

Level: 1, 2, 3, 4

Definition:

Damage, destruction, or defacement of property belonging to the school or others. The level of the offense may depend on whether the property is damaged by the student's action/s that was

Completely accidental

Unintentional but impactful (roughhousing, "playing")

Negligent (threw something intending for the trashcan but hit and broke a laptop, for example)

Intentional w purpose to cause harm or damage

Disrespect

Level: 1, 2, 3, 4

Definition:

Inappropriate comments or physical gestures to others.

Disruption to Classroom/School

Level: 1, 2, 3, 4

Definition:

Behavior (including possession of toys) that interferes with instruction, learning, and a safe and orderly environment, which includes, but is not limited to: chronic talking, throwing objects, horseplay, teasing, refusal to remain in seat, selling items without permission, rude noises, etc.

Dress Code Violation

Level: 1, 2, 3

- **1st offense:** Teacher conference with student and parent contact
- **2nd offense:** Principal conference with student and parent contact
- **3rd offense:** Principal meets with student and family to discuss behavior and expectations

Definition:

Clothing should completely cover the torso, midriff, and backside. It should have straps or sleeves. Clothing, imagery, and accessories that display or promote negative messages are not permitted. These could include drugs, weapons, alcohol, or tobacco-related information, obscenities, put-downs, innuendo, or offensive graphics/words. If a teacher questions the appropriateness of a student's dress, the student will be referred to an administrator. If the administrator determines that the student is inappropriately dressed, the student will be given the opportunity to call home and have other clothing delivered.

Electronic Devices:

Level: 1, 2, 3, 4

Personal technology devices (including but not limited to smart phones, tablets, laptops, etc.) may be used by students for instructional purposes with the permission and under the supervision of the teachers and in compliance with the Acceptable Use Policy. Possessing or using devices outside of this guidance can be subject to disciplinary consequences.

False Information/Accusations

Level: 1, 2, 3

Definition:

Willfully or maliciously giving false information, record or accusation against school personnel or other students.

Inappropriate Language

Level: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Definition:

Using vulgar or abusive spoken or written language or gestures, such as cursing and sexual innuendo. Hate speech, defined as derogatory language directed at another person verbally or in writing and based on race, religion, sexuality, ability, or appearance will automatically trigger a level 3 consequence or above.

Inciting or Participating in a School Disturbance

Level: 3, 4, 5

Definition:

Intentionally participating in or recruiting others to cause a disruption to the school atmosphere

Indecent Exposure/Sexual Behavior

Level: 3, 4, 5, 6

Engaging in behavior which is indecent, consensual or not, overly affectionate, or of a sexual nature, including possessing or transmitting sexually explicit images

Insubordination (Uncooperative Behavior)

Level: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Definition: *Refusing to follow a reasonable request or a specific direction/instruction of an adult through disobedience, defiance, unruliness, or noncompliance which includes, but is not limited to, walking away when an adult is talking to you, talking back to an adult, refusal to work in class, refusal to turn off or put away an electronic device, or refusal to report to the office*

Integrity

Level: 1, 2, 3, 4

Engaging in or attempting to engage in cheating, plagiarism, falsification, violation of software copyright laws, or violation of computer access shall be subject to disciplinary action. The following actions are specifically prohibited:

- *Cheating- giving or receiving of any unauthorized assistance on academic work*
- *Plagiarism- copying the language, structure, or idea of another and representing it as one's own work.*
- *Falsification- verbal or written statement of any untruth.*
- *Violation of software copyright laws- unauthorized duplication of computer software (computer piracy), printed material related to computer software, and/or the use of pirated computer software.*

Leaving an Area and/or Leaving Class

Level: 1, 2, 3, 4

Definition:

Leaving the classroom or other assigned area on or off campus without permission from the adult in charge.

Littering

Level: 1, 2, 3

Definition:

Intentionally leaving trash around the campus.

Physical Aggression/ Fighting

Level: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Physical Aggression: Taking any action or making comments or written messages that might reasonably be expected to result in a fight or physical altercation. Fighting (physical altercation). Fighting and physical altercation will automatically be moved to a level 3 or more.

Public Display of Affection (PDA)

Level: 1, 2, 3, 4

The school recognizes that genuine feelings of affection may exist between students; however, students shall refrain from inappropriate behaviors on campus or at school related events. Prohibited public displays of affection include lewd or otherwise inappropriate kissing, touching or fondling. Students are expected to exercise good taste and judgment to maintain a distraction-free environment conducive to learning.

School/Class Attendance

Level: 1, 2, 3

Being tardy to class, skipping class/school, leaving campus without permission, or being in an unauthorized area is prohibited. Out of school suspension should be used as a last resort as a consequence for violation of this rule

Sexual Harassment

Level: 3, 4, 5, 6

Definition:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other inappropriate verbal, written, or physical conduct of a sexual nature, directed toward others. Includes “sexting” and sharing or asking for sexually explicit images.

Stealing/Theft

Level: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Definition:

Taking, obtaining, or attempting to take property of another person or institution without permission or knowledge of the owner.

Unapproved Sale of Items

Level: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Definition:

Selling any item on campus without the approval of school personnel and administration.

Unsafe Actions

Level: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Definition:

Any action that has the potential to cause danger or physical harm to self or others; including but not limited to reckless behavior on campus, in a vehicle, or on a field experience, with or without intent to harm.

Weapons(including look-a-like guns)

Level: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Definition:

A weapon is, by way of illustration and without limitation, one of the following:

Possession and/or use of:

Firearms

A firearm as defined in 18 U.S.C. 921 of the federal code. Examples include handguns, rifles, shotguns, and bombs. Refer to the federal code for the complete definition.

Knife

This shall include, but is not limited to, switchblade knife, hunting knife, star knives, pocket knives/multi-tools razors (including straight or retractable razor)

Gun (including look-a-like gun)

Any gun of any kind, loaded or unloaded, operable or inoperable, including any object other than a firearm which is a look-a-like of a gun. This shall include, but is not limited to, pellet guns, paintball guns, stun guns, tasers, BB guns, flare guns, nail guns, and airsoft guns.

Other Weapons

Any implement which could cause, or is intended to cause bodily harm, other than a firearm, gun or knife. Including but not limited to brass knuckles, box cutters, nunchaku, spiked glove, spiked wristband, any mace derivative, tear gas device, or pepper spray product.

Bullying Policy & Procedure

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school-aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time.

In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must include:

- An Imbalance of Power: Kids who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- Repetition: Bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Some specific examples of behavior that could be considered bullying include, but are not limited to; teasing, bullying slurs, innuendo, derogatory remarks, name calling, spreading rumors, and circulating written materials or pictures that are either derogatory or insulting to an individual or group.

Bullying or intimidation by adults toward students, staff, board members or other parents will not be tolerated and will be reported to the school principal and the school resource officer.

Reporting Harassing and Bullying Behavior

1. Any student who believes that he or she has been harassed or bullied in violation of this policy should report such behavior immediately to a teacher, counselor, or administrator.
2. This behavior is expected from all members of our school community, including parents and family members. If a family reports to the administration that they have been negatively affected by another school family, this is a serious offense, and a discussion with the administration will happen.
3. A school employee who has witnessed or has reliable information that a student has been subject to any act of harassing or bullying behavior shall report the incident as soon as possible to the administrator on site

Investigation of Bullying

Reports of bullying activity will be investigated by the Principal and staff. Parents of the participants and victims will be notified. If warranted, formal disciplinary action will be taken by the Principal as outlined in the level of consequences.

Cyberbullying:

Instances of reported cyberbullying during the school day, on school grounds and over school devices will be handled in the manner described above. If the school is informed of inappropriate online comments/postings by students that happen outside of the school day, outside of the school network, or off the school campus, the following guidelines will apply:

- We will offer support to the student/family who reports, which may include consultations with our counseling staff, recommendations on tools to block and limit access to specific sites or tools, and recommendations on how to contact the hosting platform to report comments and activities.
- We will follow up to see if the behaviors are carrying into the school environment
- We will help students clarify the difference between bullying, which is behavior that is sustained, organized, creates a hostile environment, and random instances of unpleasant social media comments or conflicting political or social opinions

Corporal Punishment / Physical Management

Corporal punishment is defined as action taken by school employees or volunteers to physically handle a student in any way to purposely inflict punishment. **No corporal punishment will be administered to students by anyone in the school.**

In accordance with state law, TMCS has a trained crisis intervention team who can recognize and de-escalate situations involving people going through a mental or emotional crisis. We provide professional development opportunities

through formal training sessions, formal and informal modeling of evidence-based interventions, and crisis intervention to assist school staff in stabilizing students experiencing crisis behaviors. The use of physical safety techniques may be used by trained staff under the following conditions:

1. There must be an imminent risk of serious harm to the agitated person or someone else.
2. There must be no other practical way to prevent that harm without physical management.
3. The risk of not intervening must be greater than the risk of intervening.

School staff will communicate with families any occurrence of crisis behaviors.

Dress Code Policy and Procedures

Throughout our world, cultures set standards and norms for dress.

Context is one factor that determines the appropriateness of clothing choices. The standard for what's acceptable when attending a sporting event is typically different from what's acceptable in a workplace. What's acceptable at a shopping mall is typically different from what's acceptable at a wedding or in a place of worship. In addition to being a place of learning and work, TMCS serves as a demonstration site for educators from around the world. As such, TMCS's expectations for student dress reflects that context. Students should wear clothing that is well-suited to the school environment.

Learning at TMCS often happens off campus and may involve long walks or experiences in natural environments. As such, shoes and clothing should be chosen carefully so that students are prepared to engage in these experiences. The appropriateness and safety of footwear and clothing for a particular activity will be determined by the child's supervising teacher. If it is determined that a student is not appropriately dressed for the activity, the parent will be contacted for a change of clothing/shoes. If alternate clothing/shoes are not available, the student may miss out on the activity.

Clothing should cover the torso, and backside. It should have straps or sleeves. Clothing, imagery, and accessories that display or promote negative messages are not permitted. These could include drug, weapon, alcohol, or tobacco/vaping-related information, obscenities, put-downs, innuendo, or offensive graphics/words. If a teacher questions the appropriateness of a student's dress, the student will be referred to an administrator. If the administrator determines that the student is inappropriately dressed, the student will be given the opportunity to call a parent and have other clothing delivered.

If a staff member determines that a student is in violation of dress code standards for the school environment, the student will be

given the opportunity to call a parent and have other clothing delivered. If the parent/guardian cannot be reached the school will provide clothing for the student when possible. Habitual violations will be considered willful disrespect and non-compliance on the part of the student and formal disciplinary action will be taken:

- **1st offense:** Teacher conference with student and parent contact
- **2nd offense:** Principal conference with student and parent contact
- **3rd offense:** Principal on site meets with student and parent to discuss behavior

Drugs and Alcohol

The possession and use of illicit substances is illegal and harmful. TMCS and Board of Directors prohibits the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of illicit substances on school premises or as part of any school activities. Compliance with drug and alcohol laws is mandatory for all parents, students, and staff. Information on drug and alcohol counseling is available to all students upon request from the school counselor.

Students who are found to be vaping will be required to complete the Truth Initiative curriculum in order to return to regular activities.

Extended Suspension for Students with Disabilities

When the school system seeks to suspend students with disabilities for more than ten days, the Individual Education Program (IEP)/504 team must meet within ten days of the student's removal from school. The purpose of this meeting is to determine whether or not the behavior was a manifestation of the student's disability.

- If the IEP/504 team determines that the behavior is related to the student's disability, the student is returned to school immediately.

For students with IEPs:

- Regardless of whether the conduct is related to the disability, if the incident for which the student is being disciplined involves a dangerous weapon, a controlled dangerous substance, or serious bodily injury, the school system can unilaterally place a special education student in an alternative education setting for up to 45 days.
- If the IEP team determines that the conduct is not related to the disability, the student is subject to the regular discipline procedures explained herein. The school system is required to continue to provide the student with a free, appropriate, public education.

Student Conflict/Peer Mediation

Students are encouraged to work with one another to resolve conflicts and prevent hostility. Peer mediation is a student-based, voluntary process for resolving conflict among students. The school counselor can assist with this process. Peer mediation supports safe teaching

and learning environments by increasing student responsibility for behavior and decreasing time spent on discipline. The goal is to repair relationships and reduce negative peer interactions that interfere with the learning environment.

Items from Home

Students should only bring appropriate academic-related items to school. Unrelated magazines, toys, trading cards, etc. should remain at home unless explicit permission has been granted by the teacher. Any items (**including cell phones**) that disrupt the learning environment in any way or present a safety hazard will be confiscated according to the following guidelines:

- **1st offense:** Teacher will collect and return to the student at the end of the school day on the first occasion (Warning)
- **2nd offense:** Items will be held in the office until a parent/guardian can pick them up on the second occasion and their after. (Family Involvement)
- **3rd offense:** Item will be held in the office. Principal meets with the student and parent to discuss the behavior. (Office Referral)
- **Additional offenses:** Items will be held in the office and additional consequences will be applied as outlined in the code of student conduct.

Cell Phone/Smart Watch Policy

Students are allowed to have cell phones and smart watches at school, but the phones must be turned off and kept out of sight and the smart watch cellular function not used during the school day. 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.

Responsibility for Personal Property

All personal property, including personal computers, brought to school is brought at the owner's risk. TMCS cannot assume responsibility for any property belonging to students. Distracting or inappropriate objects will be taken from a student and returned at the end of the day. Repeated violations will require a parent conference. Students should not bring large sums of money to school. If it is necessary to bring a large sum of money, that money should be taken to the office.

Search and Seizure

To maintain order and discipline in the school and to protect the health, safety and welfare of all students and school personnel, there are times that searches may be deemed necessary. School authorities may search a student's person and/or personal property, cell phone, desk area, storage area, backpack, or parent/guardian automobile whenever a school authority has reasonable suspicion to believe that a student is in possession of illegal or unauthorized materials.

All searches will be conducted with two adults present.

Anything found in the course of a search can be used as evidence against the student. The evidence may be:

1. Seized and admitted as evidence in any suspension or recommendation for expulsion proceeding
2. Returned to the parent or guardian of the student
3. Destroyed, if it is of no significant value
4. Given to a law enforcement officer if applicable

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 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 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.

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.

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

School Counselor

The TMCS school counselor serves as a resource to students, staff, and community. The school counselor's duties range from counseling individual students, to working with parents and outside agencies to secure and promote the social and emotional health of our students. Additionally, the school counselor works closely with teachers, instructional support staff, and administrators to help identify and support students that may have unique learning needs.

Confidentiality in Counseling:

When a student indicates that he or she is thinking about hurting himself or herself or other students, school personnel are required to take action to ensure the safety of the student or other students. This action may include sharing of information with the school principal, parents, and other outside agencies. No statement, oral or written, made by a student seeking counseling for any form of drug abuse may be used as admissible evidence against him/her in any proceedings.

McKinney–Vento Homeless Assistance Act and Policy

[The McKinney-Vento Act \(42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq.\)](#) is a federal law that addresses the needs of children and youth experiencing homelessness. The law defines homeless to include the following temporary living situations due to hardship:

- Living with a friend, relative or other person
- Hotel or motel
- Shelter or transitional housing
- Car, park or other public place
- Campground or inadequate home
- Youth living on their own, runaway youth or youth kicked out

The McKinney-Vento Act addresses educational challenges created by homelessness and guarantees students the right to enroll, attend, and succeed in school. The law places the responsibility for guaranteeing the rights of students experiencing homelessness in states and school districts (NCHE, 2014). As a requirement of the federal law, all public school districts in the United States must appoint a liaison that will ensure compliance with the federal law. For more information contact TMCS's McKinney-Vento Coordinator at ajohnson@mytmcs.org.

Non-Discrimination / Non-Harassment of Students, Families and Staff

It is the policy of TMCS to maintain a safe and supportive school environment for all students and staff, free from harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying and free from discrimination due to actual or perceived race, color, creed, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship/immigration status, religion, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, or weight. The school also extends all programs and activity possibilities to students based upon their individual interests and potential without discrimination according to handicapping conditions.

Discrimination means any act or failure to act that unreasonably and

unfavorably differentiates treatment of others based solely on their membership in a socially distinct group or category, such as race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or gender identity or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. Discrimination may be intentional or unintentional.

Harassment, including sexual or gender-based harassment, is not limited to specific situations or relationships. It may occur between fellow students or co-workers, between supervisors and subordinates, between employees and students, or between non-employees, including visitors and volunteers, and employees or students. Harassment may occur between members of different genders or the same gender. Complaints alleging discrimination or harassment based on a person's biological or gender identity must be handled in accordance with procedures outlined in our bullying and harassment policy.

Right to Confidentiality of Access to Student Records

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

guarantees to parents/guardians of students under 18 and the eligible student (18 and older) the right to:

- Inspect and review the educational records of the student within 45 days after the day TMCS receives a request for access
- Request the school to disclose information in the educational records to persons/agencies outside the school.
- Request the amendment of the educational records to ensure that the records are not inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the privacy or other rights of the student.
- File with the US Department of Education a complaint concerning alleged failures by the school to comply with the requirements of *FERPA*.

Parents/Guardians or eligible students who wish to inspect education records should submit a written request to the Leadership Team that identifies the records they wish to inspect. One of the directors will make arrangements for access and notify the parent/guardian or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

Parents/Guardians or eligible students who wish to amend the education record should write to the Leadership Team and clearly identify the part of the record they want changed and specify why it should be changed. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent/guardian or eligible student, the school will notify the parent/guardian or eligible student of the decision and of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment.

Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent/guardian or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

The right to provide written consent before the school discloses personally identifiable information (PII) from the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official includes a person employed by the school as an administrator, educator, school nurse, or support staff member, or a person serving on the school board. A school official also may include a volunteer, contractor, or consultant who, while not employed by the school, performs an institutional service or function for which the school would otherwise use its own employees and who is under the direct control of the school with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education records, such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist. A school official typically has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request, the school discloses education records without consent to officials of another school or school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer. TMCS will forward such records on request.

The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the TMCS to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Rights under the No Child Left Behind Act

Parents and Students have the right to the professional qualifications of the school's classroom teachers. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 governs elementary and secondary education, allows for parents to ask for certain information about their child's classroom teachers, and requires the school to give this information to parents in a timely manner if they ask for it.

[Specifics regarding Parents Rights to Know](#)

Section 504

As a parent if you believe there might be a disability, please reach out to your child's teacher or our 504 coordinator by contacting the school.

Many students have conditions or disorders that are not readily apparent to others. They may include conditions such as specific learning disabilities, diabetes, epilepsy and severe allergies. Hidden disabilities such as low vision, poor hearing, heart disease or chronic illness may not be obvious, but if the disabilities are not properly diagnosed and they substantially limit that child's ability to receive an appropriate education as defined by Section 504, they may be considered to have an "impairment" under Section 504 standards. As a result, these students, regardless of their intelligence, will be unable to fully demonstrate their ability or attain educational benefits equal to that of non-disabled students (The Civil Rights of Students with Hidden Disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973). For more information about protecting students with disabilities please visit [US Dept of Education- Office of Civil Rights](#)

Internet Safety and Acceptable Use Policy

TMCS owns the domain mytmcs.org, and uses Google Suite for Education tools. Each student gets a Google ID associated with the domain. Typically, this ID is the first letter of the student's first name, and the student's last name, followed by our @mytmcs.org domain. (John Smith would have an ID of jsmith@mytmcs.org.) Google Suite allows the school to track student activity and communications to and from each account. Students are expected to use this account for school and educational purposes only, and not for personal communication or activity on social media sites. Students may not change their passwords without the authorization of TMCS staff. Any questions should be directed to the Principal via email.

The Mountain Community School (TMCS) recognizes the importance of the use of technology in today's education and provides internet access to students through iPads, Chromebooks, and desktop computers. Information technology (IT) resources present a unique opportunity to enhance instructional methods, appeal to different learning styles, and meet the educational goals of each student. As this technology is made available in the school, the use of these resources shall be integrated into the educational program. It is TMCS policy to: (a) prevent user access to, or transmission of, inappropriate material via Internet, electronic mail, or other forms of direct electronic communications over its computer network; (b) prevent unauthorized access and other unlawful online activity; (c) prevent unauthorized online disclosure, use, or dissemination of personal identification

information of minors; and (d) comply with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) [Pub. L. No. 106-554 and 47 USA 254(h).]

ACCEPTABLE USE:

Access to the information technology resources will be used to improve learning and teaching consistent with the educational goals of TMCS. Access to these resources is a privilege, not a right. All users of these resources, including staff and students, must comply with this policy. Any attempt to violate the provisions of this policy may result in revocation of the user's access to the information technology resources, regardless of the success or failure of the attempt.

Inappropriate network usage includes: (a) unauthorized access, including "hacking," "spamming" and other unlawful activities; and (b) unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal identification information regarding minors.

SUPERVISION AND MONITORING:

It shall be the responsibility of all members of the TMCS staff to educate, supervise, and monitor appropriate usage of the online computer network and access to the Internet in accordance with this policy, CIPA, the Neighborhood Children's Internet Protection Act, and the Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act. Student use of the IT resources is supervised by teachers in a manner that is appropriate for the age of the students and circumstances of use.

Use of TMCS IT resources shall not be considered confidential, whether use is by students or staff, and all use is subject to monitoring by designated person at any time to ensure appropriate use.

To the extent practical, technology protection measures (or "Internet Filters") shall be used to block or filter Internet (or other forms of electronic communications) access to inappropriate information. Specifically, as required by CIPA, blocking shall be applied to visual depictions of material deemed obscene (as defined in Section 1460 of Title 18, United States Code) or pornographic (as defined in Section 2256 of Title 18). Subject to staff supervision, technology protection measures may be disabled for adults or, in the case of minors, minimized only for bona fide research or other lawful purposes.

To the extent practical, steps shall be taken to promote the safety and security of users of the TMCS online computer network when using electronic mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, and other forms of direct electronic communications.

It shall be the responsibility of all members of TMCS's staff to educate about, supervise, monitor, and track history of usage of the online computer network and access to the Internet in accordance with this policy and the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA).

INTERNET AND TECHNOLOGY (IT) EDUCATION:

Members of the TMCS staff will provide age-appropriate training for students who use the TMCS Internet and technology facilities. The training provided will be designed to promote our school's commitment to:

- The standards and acceptable use of Internet services as set forth in the TMCS IT Policy;

- Student Safety with regard to:
 - i. Safety on the Internet;
 - ii. Appropriate behavior while on online, on social networking websites, and chat rooms; and
 - iii. Cyber-bullying awareness and response.
 - Compliance with the E-rate requirements of CIPA.
- Following receipt of this training, the student will acknowledge that he/she received the training, understood it, and agrees to follow the provisions of the acceptable use policies.