

MISSION AND PURPOSES

A. STATE THE MISSION OF THE SCHOOL (two to three sentences):

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.

B. DESCRIBE HOW THE SCHOOL'S PROGRAM IMPLEMENTS ONE OR MORE OF THE PURPOSES. 115C-238.29A.

The Mountain Community School will implement many of the purposes of 115C-238.29A by virtue of its basic design and by the innovative core and supplemental curricula we intend to employ.

Small class size will constitute the cornerstone of our program. This allows for greater individualized attention for each student and an opportunity for teachers to tailor teaching methods to suit the needs of each child. Teachers will be encouraged to utilize a variety of teaching strategies and tools to engage and stimulate students to achieve excellence. Personalized and creative teaching will benefit students across the academic spectrum.

Parent and community involvement will be vital to the success of the MCS. Through the use of parental involvement agreements and the recruitment of support from business and community groups, we will bring our community into our school as partners in public education. We are very fortunate in Henderson County to have a large retiree community that has a keen interest in public education. By bringing the generations together, we can enrich the educational experience of our students and the lives of everyone involved. The support provided by our partnership with the community will also allow our teachers time to work on improving the educational direction of our school, and afford them opportunities to work together as a group in a teaching community with a truly shared vision.

We have chosen a curriculum of scope and sequence which is rich in content and furnishes common ground for communication in a diverse society. The Core Knowledge Sequence has been shown by statistical studies to narrow the performance gap between students of lower socioeconomic status and others. This curriculum provides a clear progression with building blocks of knowledge which will foster teacher cooperation between grades.

The Mountain Community School's calendar has been designed to allow for periodic enrichment and enhancement. The use of frequent intercessions throughout the year provides

an opportunity to offer intensive tutoring to those who need it. These intercessions also ensure that students and teachers have regular breaks from academic rigors, keeping them vitalized to learn, and energized to teach.

Assessment of our success will be measured not only in terms of standardized testing, but also by parent, student, and teacher satisfaction. The MCS will be evaluated by the willingness of families to choose our school, as well as by the open-door policy of the Board and Principal to accept and solicit input from parents and children concerning the curricula, governance, and function of our school.

Students will be expected to participate in service projects for their school and community. The sense of self-worth and “connectedness” this provides the children will enhance their self-respect and motivate them towards successful learning.

C. STATE THE EDUCATIONAL FOCUS FOR THE PROPOSED CHARTER SCHOOL.

115c-238.29B(a) (c) This may include the mission of the school.

NOTE: This one brief paragraph summary describes the general mission and purposes of the Charter School and may be used for public relations purposes.

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 will be the hallmark of this school. Our goal is to instill a sense of pride and a love of learning in each and every child, through service to school and community.

D. FROM THE APPLICANT’S PERSPECTIVE, STATE THE LIKELY IMPACT THAT THE PROPOSED CHARTER SCHOOL WILL HAVE ON THE COMMUNITY IN WHICH IT PLANS TO LOCATE.

The creation of a charter school will benefit our community in many ways. A diverse, healthy, and vibrant school system adds to the overall well-being and attractiveness of a town. A school system that encourages choice, competition, and innovation is clearly committed to providing excellence in education.

The MCS will allow for greater educational options for families in Henderson County. Private schools are out of the financial reach of many families. A new public school with a different approach to teaching methods and school design will allow families from our area to choose the program that best meets their child's needs. Our school will provide an additional option which may even bring new families into the public school system. In addition, the higher level of satisfaction with the public schools will increase the support for

the system as a whole. A wider range of educational options in the county can also be viewed as a tool for recruiting new businesses and those who value quality public education.

Overcrowding has become a significant problem in the Henderson County Public Schools. Since the county is growing at a rapid rate, it is likely that this will continue to be a problem for some time. The Mountain Community School will be host to 7 - 9 classes of students, which will help alleviate crowding, and allow for smaller class size in the public school system.

The MCS will serve as a model for innovative approaches to education that may be carried over to the local system. The opportunity to test and experiment with proven models of education in a local setting may provide valuable information for the school board in long range planning. The experiences of the charter school may also help the local board in their decisions concerning future programs.

American society thrives on competition, which encourages excellence. Nowhere is this more important than in public education. The Henderson County Public School system will undoubtedly benefit from the increased competition, which will serve as a force for renewal of their commitment to excellence.

The MCS will engender a lively discussion on educational philosophy which will spark a large sector of our community to become actively involved in the future of our children. The increased awareness of the needs, diversity, and potential of Henderson County youth will strengthen our community as a whole.

IV. EDUCATION PLAN

Please answer all sections. Do not use “same as LEA” or “whatever the law says”.
Lack of documentation will jeopardize the application review.

A. METHODS OF DOCUMENTING STUDENT SUCCESS:

115C-238.29B(b)(2)

Provide a brief description of the method of documenting student success for the school.

We plan to use the ABC Accountability Model (i.e., state eog/eoc tests).

We plan to use _____ assessment in place of the state tests. (If so, the applicants will provide statements of comparability for the assessment instrument or a reason why the state tests would be inappropriate for the particular student population, e.g. severe/profoundly mentally handicapped students.) The State Board must approve this request.

Successful outcomes for the students at The Mountain Community School will be measured in a variety of ways. We recognize the need for standardization of testing to compare all students in North Carolina and will therefore used the ABC Accountability Model as one method of assessment.

Student success will also be documented through action. Families may choose to enroll their children at The Mountain Community School, or remove them if they are dissatisfied with the outcomes. This will help assure a quality product through competition and resulting market forces in the public education field.

We believe that testing should be in the service of learning. Parent and student input will also be used to gauge success on a regular basis. Frequent and meaningful communication between parents and teachers will be encouraged so that weaknesses can be identified and strategies to enhance a students learning can be employed.

B. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GOALS:

115C-238.29B(b)(2)

Provide a description of the student achievement goals for the school if you are NOT using the ABC Model.

We plan to use the ABC Accountability Model (i.e., Standard Course of Study).

We plan to use the following instructional model.

C. ADMISSION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

115c-238.29B(b)(4)

115C-238.29F(g)

Provide the policies and the procedures for admitting students to the charter school including the 'lottery' option if more students apply than the school can accommodate.

Admission to The Mountain Community School is open to all students eligible under the guidelines established in 115C-238.29F(g). Any child who is qualified under the laws of this State for admission to a public school is qualified for admission to this charter school, provided age and grade requirements are met. Students entering kindergarten must turn five years of age on or before October 15th of the school year.

Admission shall not be determined according to the school attendance area in which a student resides. The Mountain Community School shall not discriminate against any student on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, gender, or disability, nor shall admission of students be determined on the basis of intellectual ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, athletic ability, disability, race, creed, gender, national origin, religion, or ancestry. Every effort will be made to recruit students from all sections of the community to ensure proportionate representation of all segments of the population.

Enrollment priority will be given to children of the school's principal, teachers, teacher assistants, and initial members of the Board of Directors as allowed in 115C-238.29F(g)(5).

In the spring of each year, The Mountain Community School will hold an open enrollment period for approximately six weeks. If, at the end of the open enrollment period, the number of applicants does not exceed the number of spaces available at a given grade level, all students who are otherwise qualified for admission will be accepted. Additional students will then be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis until the grade level is filled.

If, at the end of the open enrollment period, the number of students applying for admission to one or more grades exceeds the number of spaces available, enrollment spaces will be determined by lottery. In situations where a lottery must be held, the lottery will continue even after spaces have been filled, to determine priority on a waiting list.

Students enrolled in previous years will have priority to attend the school in subsequent years, provided they remain in good standing with the school. Siblings of currently enrolled students who were admitted in the current or a previous year will be given priority, on a space available basis, beginning in the school's second year of operation.

Final acceptance will be issued after at least one parent or guardian attends an orientation meeting with their child(ren). These meetings will include an interview with the Principal and/or representative from the Board of Directors. During the meeting the school's representative will outline the mission, educational philosophy, goals, curriculum, and standards of conduct, while parents/guardians can share their expectations and goals for their child. If parents deem the school an appropriate choice for their child, then they will be

asked to sign enrollment papers. At this time, parents will be also be encouraged to sign the Family Agreement, as a way of committing family support to the school's partnership with their child(ren).

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.

D. STUDENT EXPULSION AND EXCLUSION:

115C-238.29B(b)(11)

115C-238.29F(g)(7)

Provide in detail the procedures and grounds for expelling and excluding students from the charter school.

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

- offers the same set of rules for everyone
- provides equal application of all rules
- fosters responsible students
- promotes a safe and comfortable environment
- has a friendly and cooperative atmosphere
- provides opportunities to participate
- offers a real chance for success

Students in a positive educational climate are expected to be good citizens, demonstrating through speech and action, a respect for others and self. Teachers are 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, they will be referred to the Principal, and if necessary, to the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors 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 his/her version of the incident.

The Principal, with the approval of the Board of Directors may impose either a short term in-school or short term out-of-school suspension of from 1 to 10 days in length, or a long-term out-of-school suspension, from 11 to 365 days in length, depending upon the severity of the violation, the circumstances of the situation, and his/her professional judgement. Other administrative actions may be contemplated in addition to suspension.

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 should be considered before an expulsion is decided upon. The expelled student is permanently prohibited from returning to the school unless the Board of Directors reverses its decision. A student may apply for readmission, but not before the first July 1, that is at least 6 months after the expulsion date. The same due process procedures as a long-term suspension apply except the student may appeal the original decision to North Carolina Superior Court within thirty days.

A student may be expelled only if: (1) the student is at least 14 years of age and/or (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.

E. INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM:

115C-238.29F(d)(1-5)

Provide a school calendar for a minimum of 180 instructional days for the upcoming school year and the overall instructional program, including models, curriculum, design, methods, etc.

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, rich with "core knowledge" and relevant to daily life, children will be inspired to succeed within their personal framework of aptitude and interest. Coherence of curriculum and integration of topics of study will be primary goals. Teachers will coordinate the curriculum across grade levels and use teaching methods which accommodate different learning styles. Additionally, we intend to give children the sense of ownership of their school and of belonging to a greater community, therefore instilling pride, self-reliance and responsibility, which are essential for developing self-directed, life-long learning skills.

The Mountain Community School will utilize the Core Knowledge Sequence as our basic curriculum. The premise of CKS is that schools need a solid, detailed, shared central curriculum to help students build a strong foundation of knowledge, a high level of literacy, and to achieve academic excellence. This concept has been developed by Dr. E.D. Hirsch, Jr., the well-respected educator and author of the book *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*. The Core Knowledge Network provides a variety of technical support programs including lesson plans, teacher training sessions and online services which will help us ensure proper implementation of the curriculum. Additional curricula will be

incorporated to complement CKS, with special emphasis on developing critical thinking skills.

Recognizing that students present a range of learning abilities and needs, a wide variety of teaching tools will be employed. Our teachers will be encouraged to utilize other methods including Paideia, didactic, Socratic practices, and other appropriate methods. The teachers will have opportunities to pursue the training necessary for them to become better educators. Recognizing that teachers need time, autonomy and support, we will include parent and community volunteers as helpers and educational resources.

Children need a sense of pride in themselves and their accomplishments if they are to become productive members of a learning community. The Mountain Community School will have school and community service programs through which students will develop a sense of responsibility for themselves and their world. In this way, the children will also encounter a diversity of ideas and career opportunities which will further motivate them to learn. We also hope that those activities which bring the students into the community and the community into the school will promote appreciation of and commitment to education throughout Henderson County.

To further address the needs of all levels of learners, The MCS will offer both enrichment and enhancement programs for our students. These programs will be integrated within the core curriculum and supplemented throughout the school year. Our calendar (Appendix B) has been designed with the intention of building these programs into intersession periods.

LANGUAGE ARTS

The language arts curriculum at Mountain Community School will encompass skills development (i.e. reading, writing, grammar, spelling, oral language) and literature review. Recognizing that different children learn to read at different ages, teachers will be given the flexibility to progress each child through the curriculum at their own pace. We recognize that verbal and oral communication is an essential building block for higher learning skills.

Core Knowledge Sequence will be the basis of the Language Arts program at Mountain Community School. Kindergarten through third grade students will use the Open Court Series for Young Readers to develop reading, grammar, spelling and comprehension skills. This program was chosen because it uses a balanced approach to the teaching of reading, including systematic direct instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics, grade-appropriate decodable text, and a variety of authentic literature texts which incorporate social studies and science themes. The series also includes a strong writing component. Open Court was recently chosen by the Teachers Federation as one of seven reading programs proven to help raise academic achievement, especially for struggling students.

The fourth through eighth grade curriculum will be based on the Core Knowledge Sequence of literature review which includes short fiction, drama, speeches of historic significance and commonly used phrases. Writing and research, with attention to vocabulary and grammar will be a strong component of the curriculum. Students will be taught four critical reasoning

skills: analysis, comparison, inference/interpretation, and evaluation while reading a wide variety of literature.

MATHEMATICS

The primary goal of mathematics education is to ensure that every student will become mathematically literate. This implies that the student is a good critical thinker and problem solver, is confident in his/her ability to do mathematics, is able to communicate and reason mathematically, and values mathematics. In order to achieve these goals, the mathematics curriculum will engage students as much as possible with exercises which are drawn from and directly applicable to daily situations. The use of calculators and/or computers to enhance and enrich the mathematics program is encouraged at all levels.

In the early grades, K-3, the focus will be on building skills such as oral counting, number recognition and sequencing, recognizing and working with money, measuring, telling time, learning to use a calendar, identifying times of day and seasons, identifying shapes, sorting, patterning, and graphing real objects and pictures. Skills will be integrated and build upon one another each year until students master basic addition, subtraction, multiplication and division facts; can create, read, and write observations from graphs; identify sorting and patterning rules, lines of symmetry, and volume of a standard container; picture, name, and order fractions; identify angles; identify and draw polygons.

In grades 4-6, the focus expands to include provisions for establishment of skills in translating ideas into mathematical language and symbols, learning to estimate, developing independence in solving meaningful problems, collecting data and representing the results, and examining notions of elementary probability and statistics. Continued emphasis whole number concepts and computation, patterning rules, and measurement continues. Work with fractions, mixed numbers, decimals, percents and ratios, area and perimeter measurement is expanded.

In the seventh and eighth grades, the skills developed in the elementary grades are reviewed and extended. Concepts, procedures, and vocabulary that students will need in order to be successful in upper-level algebra and geometry courses are introduced and continually practiced. The topics emphasized at these grade levels are: operations on rational numbers, beginning algebra, informal geometry, measurement, graphs, scale drawings, elementary probability, statistics, and problem solving.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The Mountain Community School will be dedicated to providing our students with a solid, broad-ranging understanding of the fundamentals of science. The science and technology curriculum will stress hands-on, inquiry-based investigations of scientific phenomena following the Core Knowledge Science Sequence for content supplemented by skill development from the NC Standard Course of Study and methodologies from the Science

and Technology for Children (STC) curriculum developed by the National Science Resource Center in conjunction with the Smithsonian Institution and the National Academy of Sciences.

By integrating science concepts across the other disciplines in a systematic, coordinated progression, we will provide the essential building blocks needed for deeper scientific study and understanding. Incorporation of guest presentations, demonstrations and field trips to the greatest extent possible will also expand our students' experiential understanding of science as well as greater insight into potential career opportunities. We will also take full advantage of the rich environmental heritage of our region to develop an understanding of the workings of the natural world around us.

The goals of our curriculum will be to help children develop scientific reasoning skills and the ability to solve practical problems, to contribute to children's conceptual understanding of the world around them, to foster the development of scientific attitudes--curiosity, respect for evidence, critical reflection, flexibility, sensitivity to living things, and to integrating science across the other academic disciplines.

Our students will work through the fundamentals of Plants and Animals, Conservation of Natural Resources, Natural History, The Human Body, Physical Science, Earth Science, Chemistry, Electricity, Meteorology, Astronomy, and Engineering. We will be including study of biographies of important scientists from the areas being studied, from Copernicus to Sally Ride. We will work to include applied aspects of each area being studied to help our students relate their understanding of scientific concepts to the everyday world around them.

Computer Technology Skills

The Mountain Community School will incorporate computer technology skills into its everyday curriculum to the extent possible keeping in mind that computer technology is merely a tool and not an end in itself. Students will become familiar with computers and use them as a tool for learning. Students will integrate computer researching, word processing and graphics skills as appropriate support for their academic work across all subject areas. By the time the students are ready to move on to high school, they will be expected to be familiar with a wide variety of computer programs as a result of computer technology usage in their academic pursuits.

SOCIAL STUDIES GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

The goal of the social studies curriculum is to expand children's horizons beyond their family and home to the larger world, both past and present. The field of social studies will include history, geography and anthropology. Geographical knowledge includes a spatial sense of the world, an awareness of the physical processes that shape life, a sense of the interaction between humans and their environment, an understanding of the relations between time,

place, and culture, and an awareness of the characteristics of specific regions and cultures. North Carolina, American, and world history will be presented with increasing detail in each grade. The study of anthropology will be incorporated within the study of geographical areas and history.

In the geography unit the focus in the early years will be to work with maps and globes and to introduce relevant vocabulary. As the children's geographic literacy expands, specific regions will be studied in depth. In addition, ancient and present cultures will be discussed in the context of their location. Beginning in the sixth grade the subjects of geography and history will merge into a unified field of study.

The history curriculum will introduce major events in American and world history in the first few years. This material will be expanded in each successive year. North Carolina history will be given special emphasis within the context of American history. Starting in sixth grade, American and world history will merge chronologically allowing a fuller understanding of the pre-modern world and current affairs in the context of past history. The cultures of peoples both past and present will be explored within this framework. A special emphasis will be placed on the diverse cultures of our country with a central theme of understanding.

The texts and teaching materials in the first few years will consist of various published maps and manipulatives the children will create. In the upper grades students will be expected to search library materials and other references for information in these areas. This will allow students to expand their skills in research, the arts and library sciences.

ARTS

The Mountain Community School believes that the arts represent an essential component of a student's education. Arts are indivisible from life; therefore, the arts are indivisible from education. The arts are symbolic of the human condition and help us to understand ourselves. 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. Individually, mathematics, science, and history convey only part of the reality of the world; nor do the arts alone suffice. A multiplicity of symbol systems are necessary to produce a more complete picture and comprehensive education.

Through attaining a basic knowledge of the arts, children are not only better prepared to understand and appreciate works of art, but also so communicate their ideas, feelings, and judgements to others. A good understanding of the arts grows out of at least three modes of knowledge - creative, historical, and analytical. Early study of the arts should embrace all three modes with special emphasis on creativity and active participation.

Core Knowledge will serve as the foundation of our arts program. In the visual arts, students will study generally recognized elements of art including line, shape, form, space, light, texture, and color. The use of these elements in design of paintings, photographs, sculpture,

and architecture will be examined through the history of world cultures. Biographies of well-known artists will be included. We will use extension programs to enhance student appreciation for and understanding of the arts, such as the "Arts in the Schools" project, developed in conjunction with the North Carolina Museum of Art, and "Architivities", from the American Institute of Architects.

Students will be given opportunities to learn about music through listening, as well as through active participation in music activities. The elements of music including rhythm, melody, harmony, form, timbre, etc., will be examined through listening to representative instrumental and vocal classical works, as well as singing familiar melodies. Students will learn to recognize the sound of different musical instruments, and will be introduced to basic musical terminology. Simple biographies of well-known composers will also be a part of the curriculum. Students in higher grades will become familiar with the elements of an orchestra, as well as musical styles which vary across cultures and time periods.

MCS will encourage the use of music, art, dance and/or theater as independent learning activities, and/or as extension activities for lessons from history, language arts, and sciences. While reinforcing learning from other parts of the curriculum, such hands-on activities also serve to build self-control, discipline, cooperation and sequencing skills, as well as providing a holistic basis to education.

Our region hosts a wealth of artistic talent, and we anticipate inviting local artists to assist with programs for The MCS students. A local community theater group has expressed a willingness to offer outreach programs at the school, as well as offering support for dramatic arts endeavors of interested teachers and students. The school and the community will mutually benefit from the bonds created by these and other cooperative efforts.

MULTIDISCIPLINARY/EXTRACURRICULAR PROGRAMS

The Mountain Community School will also offer many multidisciplinary and extracurricular programs to enhance and supplement the educational experience. We believe that children need a sense of community and self-worth to learn effectively. Students at The Mountain Community School will be expected to participate in service projects within the school and local community. Students at upper grade levels will take an active role in tutoring and modeling behavior for the younger children.

We plan to take advantage of such extracurricular opportunities as Odyssey of the Mind, Science Fair, Science Stars, conflict resolution, and scholastic chess. The Enrichment and Enhancement programs offered during intercessions will also provide our students with exposure to a wide range of subjects and experiences beyond the regular classroom.

A healthy mind and a healthy body are both required for successful learning. We will integrate a health curriculum which will focus on healthy life-style choices and safety issues which are grade appropriate. Time will be allowed each day for children to engage in physical activity, both structured and free form (i.e. recess). Students will be encouraged to

participate in sports programs offered through the Henderson County Parks and Recreation Department and other local organizations.