

## **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 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 are guided to success. Small class size, strong parental support, teacher autonomy, and a willingness to explore innovative teaching methods are the hallmark of this school. Our goal is to instill a sense of pride and a love of learning in each and every child, through service to school and community.

## **Notice**

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

## **Non-Discrimination Statement**

The Mountain Community School shall not discriminate against any person 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.

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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 utilizing the Core Knowledge Curriculum. The goal was to offer an alternative public education choice to families in this area. Small class and school size, a commitment to academic excellence and strong parental involvement were the fundamental goals for the school.

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

The school is governed by a Board that functions under the bylaws of The Henderson County Alliance for Education. Board members are either elected 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 the third Tuesday of each month at 6PM 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 in the Principal's office. 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.

## Letter from the Principal

Dear Parents and Friends,

Hi! My name is Chad Hamby and I am the Principal of The Mountain Community School. I realize that when you entrust your child to a school, there are many things that you expect. You expect a strong curriculum, kind teachers, and a friendly atmosphere. But do you expect a family?

A school and a family are so much alike. You get out of the relationship just what you put into it. The Mountain Community School offers you an opportunity to begin an amazing educational experience embraced by a family atmosphere. I use the term family and school interchangeably. I want those two words to gel into a single meaning.

We believe that this school needs to be special in the eyes of every parent, child and teacher. We all have a vested interest in our children. In an effort to ensure the success of our children, The Mountain Community School is forming a bond and a partnership with each and every child and parent. This partnership joins everyone involved with this school in an effort to allow each child the opportunity to reach his or her potential in an environment that will foster a love of learning.

With the help of parents, students and faculty, this will be done at The Mountain Community School. Our end product will be a responsible citizen with a strong sense of family, and the phrase, "To Learn to Love to Learn," will be ingrained in their personality. I invite you to come be a part of the fantastic school that we have created. Come join The Mountain Community School family!

The Parent and Student Handbook is designed to acquaint you with policies and regulations of the school as well as give you information that will be beneficial to you throughout the school year.

The Board, Principal, Faculty, and Staff of The Mountain Community School approach this coming year with excitement and enthusiasm. We look forward to a rewarding school year!

Sincerely,

Chad Hamby

Principal

## **A Message From the Board of Directors**

Welcome to The Mountain Community School family! If you are a family new to our school, we are glad you have decided to join your child in the educational adventure of a lifetime. We hope that you find the contents of this handbook useful as we begin our unique educational partnership. If you are a returning family, we are certain you will be as grateful as we are to see this handbook finally come to life after three years in operation.

The Board of Directors of The Mountain Community School is committed to the 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. This is the only public school alternative to the conventional system.

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

## **Parental Involvement**

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

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

### **As its contribution to the partnership, TMCS commits to:**

- Provide a program of academic excellence which fulfills the goals expressed in our mission statement
- Provide a safe and supportive environment for learning
- Communicate with parents regularly regarding their child's progress

and needs

- Promptly notify parents of any disciplinary action necessary regarding their child
- Assist parents in meeting their obligation to their child's educational needs and their responsibility to the school

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

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

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

- Attend school as scheduled and arrive on time, and the event of absence, the student's parent or guardian will provide a note upon return.
- Obey the rules and regulations of the school.
- Be courteous, obedient, and respectful to school staff and personnel
- Be respectful and considerate of classmates
- Complete homework assignments in a thorough and timely manner

### **Parent Teacher Council**

The Parent Teacher Council (P.T.C.) is an organization that coordinates the parent volunteers and fundraising for the various needs of TMCS. It is a separate organization but answers to TMCS School Board. The PTC is governed by an Executive Council.

## **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, rich with "core knowledge" 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.

### **Core Knowledge**

The foundation of the curriculum at The Mountain Community School is the Core Knowledge Sequence (CKS). The premise of CKS is that schools need a solid, detailed, shared central curriculum to help students build a strong foundation of knowledge. 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 help us ensure proper implementation of the curriculum. Additional curricula, including the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, are incorporated to complement CKS, with special emphasis on developing critical thinking skills.

## **CURRICULUM OVERVIEW**

### **Elementary Grades - K through 5**

Teachers at the elementary level are generally 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

\*Both third and four grade students receive Language Arts instruction from the fourth grade teacher. Similarly, both grades receive Mathematics instruction from the third grade teacher.

## **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:

14. Language Arts\*

15. Mathematics\*

16. History & Geography

17. Science

18. Computer Skills\*\*

\*Additional Enrichment programs in Language Arts and Mathematics are integrated into the weekly classroom schedule at the middle school level.

\*\*In addition to class instruction in computer skills, the use of computers is integrated into classroom assignments in all core subject areas.

## **Odyssey of the Mind**

TMCS students have the opportunity to participate in Odyssey of the Mind, a national program that challenges students to solve problems using creativity, imagination and teamwork. Working in groups of seven or less, Odyssey of the Mind teams work to create short plays that answer a predetermined series of challenges, and present their plays for schools and at regional competitions. The most important rule for Odyssey of the Mind projects is that the students must do everything themselves and outside assistance is strictly prohibited. Adult assistance is limited to a team's coach, who serves in an advisory capacity. This fantastic program helps students build self-confidence, improve problem-solving skills, and learn to work together with others. TMCS teams are organized in the fall and work at their own pace towards the regional competition in February or March.

## **Chess**

Research has shown that participation in scholastic chess programs can help students improve problem-solving skills, abstract-thinking capabilities and even improve test scores. TMCS is a member school of the Henderson County Scholastic Chess Association and offers its students a Chess Club after school that allows students to learn and play the game of chess. Instruction is combined with free-play time; there are also opportunities for our students to participate as a team in regional and state scholastic chess tournaments.

## **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.

## **Technology**

The Mountain Community School integrates technology into the teaching of Math, Science, Language Arts and Social Studies. In addition, students receive specialized computer instruction aimed at meeting the competency goals outlined in the NC Computer/Technology Skills Standard Course of Study. These include keyboarding, desktop publishing, the use of spreadsheets and databases, as well as the use of the Internet as a research and educational tool. In all areas of computer use, ethical standards are emphasized.

## **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. Each week students are informed of their outstanding fines (fines for books that have been returned) 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. Parents will not receive student report cards until fines are cleared and overdue books are returned or paid for.

## **Art and Music**

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.

Classroom teachers at TMCS incorporate music, art, dance and/or theater as extension activities for lessons from history, language arts, and sciences. While reinforcing learning from other disciplines, such hands-on activities serve to build self-control, discipline, cooperation and sequencing skills, as well as providing a holistic basis to education.

## **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. Sports teams currently offered included Boys & Girls Basketball and Girls Spring Soccer, but offerings vary depending on student interest and the availability of coaches. 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.

## **Special Needs 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), autistic, 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 Principal, the Learning Center Director, 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. 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 when space permits.

## **Sunset Club**

### *The Mountain Community School's Program for Out-of-School Time*

The Mountain Community School offers families a safe and caring option at times when school is not in session. Sunset Club provides after-school care and activities for students on all regular school days. The time is spent in structured activities and games, free play, snack, with time set aside for homework. The program operates on an extended schedule to accommodate early dismissal and many school holidays. During the spring and fall breaks, enrichment programs such as art, music, pottery, and dance are incorporated into the program's full day schedule. Staff to student ratio for Sunset Club averages 1 to 7.

## **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 October 15th of the school year.

Admission shall be 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 occur in the spring of each year lasting approximately six weeks. In the event that applications exceed available spaces at TMCS, a lottery will be held to determine enrollment and waiting list order.

In accordance with state law, children of the school's principal, teachers, and teaching assistants may be granted priority for available openings, as may siblings of currently enrolled students.

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

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

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

## Ongoing Enrollment

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

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

## Completion of Enrollment Procedure

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

Attendance at the beginning of the school year is extremely important. The curriculum utilized by the school, the Core Knowledge Sequence, 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. All students must attend school on the first day. Students must be in attendance for at least half a day (three hours) in order to be counted as present.
2. **Students who do not attend school on the first day will risk losing their space at the school.** If a student does not attend school on the first day, and the Principal has not been notified in advance **in writing**, he/she shall have the discretion to reassign that space to the next student on the waiting list. School officials will make every attempt to reach a family whose child is absent.

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

## **Student Attendance Policy**

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

### **Excused Absences**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Unexcused Absences**

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

absences; a second letter is sent 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.

## **Excessive Absences**

Excused or unexcused absences over thirty (K-5) or twenty (grades 6-8) are excessive. Students with excessive absences during the year will be evaluated by the Principal, with input from the teacher and parent, to determine if the child should 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.

## **Testing**

We believe that testing should be in the service of learning. Evaluation of student progress is accomplished through a variety of means. Individual students 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.

### ***N.C. Testing Requirements***

#### *NC Pretests (Grade 3)*

The North Carolina Grade 3 Pretests in reading and mathematics are multiple-choice tests administered to all students at the beginning (within the first three weeks of school) of grade 3. The grade 3 pretest measures the knowledge and skills specified for grade 2 from the reading and mathematics goals and objectives of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS). The tests provide pre-scores for third graders for the ABCs Accountability Program, and are used in the analysis of growth.

#### *NC End-of-Grade Tests (Grades 3-8)*

The End-of-Grade tests are multiple-choice tests that measure the achievement of curricular objectives described in the NCSCOS.. The tests and curricular objectives have a strong emphasis on higher-order thinking skills. End-of-Grade tests are administered to all students in grades 3-8 within the final three weeks of school. A computerized adaptive version of these tests is available as an accommodation for some students with disabilities with an IEP or Section 504 Plan and

appropriate documentation.

- Reading Comprehension

Reading Comprehension Tests assess reading by having students read authentic passages and then answer questions directly related to the passages. Knowledge of vocabulary is assessed indirectly through application and understanding of terms within the context of passages and questions. According to State Board of Education policy, for students in grades 3 through 8 the standard for grade-level proficiency shall be a test score at Level III or above on the End-of-Grade Reading Comprehension Test.

- Mathematics

Mathematics Tests assess student achievement in the seven strands of the NCSCOS mathematics curriculum: numeration, geometry, patterns and pre-algebra, measurement, problem-solving, data analysis and statistics, and computation. The test contains two parts, a computation section and an applications section. Students may use a ruler, protractor, and calculator for the applications section only. According to State Board of Education policy, for students in grade 3 through 8 the standard for grade-level proficiency shall be a test score at Level III or above on the End-of-Grade Mathematics Test.

*NC Writing Assessment (Grades 4 and 7)*

The North Carolina Writing Assessment measures written expression (composition) skills, such as main idea, supporting details, organization, coherence, and the application of grammatical conventions. Students in grade 4 write a narrative essay which may be personal or imaginative. Students in grade 7 write a descriptive or expository (clarification or point-of-view) essay. This assessment, which consists of one writing prompt at each grade, is administered statewide on one test date designated by the NCDPI.

*NC Open-ended Assessment (Grades and 8)*

The North Carolina Open-Ended Assessment broadly measures curricular goals and commonly requires integration of knowledge and skills from more than one curricular goal or objective. Students must generate responses by writing out their thoughts and showing their work. The students are required to analyze, explain, apply, interpret, and evaluate information in response to tasks set forth by the assessment. Responses are scored using a rubric scale that varies depending on the complexity of the task.

*NC Tests of Computer Skills*

The overall goal stated for the NCSCOC Computer Skills/Technology Curriculum, and the corresponding test, is to help "students...(become) independent users of technology for school and personal needs." The North Carolina Tests of Computer Skills assess the K-8 component of the Computer Skills/Technology Curriculum. The assessment consists of a multiple-choice test and a performance test. The tests are administered

initially to students in grade 8. The testing dates are locally established within the NCDPI-designated testing window. The revised standard (effective July 1, 1997) is a multiple-choice scale score of at least 47 and a performance scale score of at least 49.

Computer Proficiency Requirements - Beginning with the class of 2001, North Carolina students must demonstrate computer skills proficiency as a requirement for graduation. Students tested during grade 8 who do not meet the proficiency standard are to be retested during high school on the test(s) (i.e., the performance and/or multiple-choice) that they did not pass. According to State Board of Education policy, some students with disabilities may demonstrate computer skills proficiency through the use of the computer skills portfolio accommodation if documented in the students' IEP or Section 504 plan.

### **Grievance Procedures**

Constructive criticism motivated by a sincere desire to improve the quality of the educational experience of our children, as well as the quality of the work environment for our staff, 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. Therefore, the proper channeling of complaints involving instruction, discipline, or teaching methods and materials will be as follows:

- Teacher
- Principal
- 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.

## **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
- Election or appointment to the Board of Directors

Volunteers must be of sound moral character, and free from infections, such as tuberculosis, which can be spread by regular daily contact. No individual may 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.

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

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

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

## **Safety**

### ***Safe Equipment Use***

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

### ***Traffic Safety***

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

### ***Bomb Threat***

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

- No drills. Principal and designee will check sports field.
- An all-call will be made to each classroom. (Each classroom and workroom will be informed by the principal or designee).
- The entire school will evacuate to the sports-field.
- Teachers will count students.
- 911 will be called using a land-line. (No cell-phones will be used)
- All gates will be unlocked.
- Principal or designee will check Faith Christian School's soccer field.
- Students will be evacuated to Faith Christian School's soccer field.
- In the event of inclement weather, Faith Christian School's gymnasium will be checked and used.

### ***Intruders***

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

\*Each situation will be different

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

- Staff member will move children to safety.
- Principal or designee will be notified.

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

**\*Fail-safe Card**

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

***Emergency School Closing***

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

In the case of an emergency, which requires the closing of school, parents will be notified as soon as possible through the appropriate media. The principal in the event of a school closing shall notify the school board.

***Building Security***

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

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

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

***Building Use Policy***

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

There will be a clean up 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 office manager will dispense prescribed medication to students.

## **Discipline**

The Mountain Community School is committed to providing a quality education for children within a safe and orderly atmosphere. In order for the school to satisfactorily meet the needs of students, there must exist a climate of discipline conducive to 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. As such, it is our hope that our exclusion/expulsion policy will never need implementation.

Please refer to the complete Discipline Policy distributed the beginning of each year for details.

## **Behavioral Expectations**

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

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

### ***Unacceptable Behaviors***

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

- No student shall leave the school grounds during regular school hours without prior permission from school authorities. A student who is between the ages of 7 and 16 years of age is required by the State Compulsory Attendance Law to attend school "No person shall encourage, entice or counsel any child to be unlawfully absent from

school." (G.S. 115C-378)

**2. Hazing**

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

**3. Smoking or use of tobacco or tobacco products**

- Students are not permitted to smoke, possess or use tobacco or tobacco products on school grounds.

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

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

**5. A purposeful act intended to disrupt school**

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

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

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

**7. Theft, or damage to private property**

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

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

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

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

- No student shall engage in riotous, insubordinate conduct that causes, or is intended to cause a disturbance or disruption to the

normal operation of school and its various school day activities, or any other school-sponsored activity.

**10. Assault on another student or fighting**

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

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

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

**12. Bomb threat or hoax**

- No student shall, by any means of communication make a report, knowing or having reason to know, the report is false, that there is located on any school premises a device designed to cause damage or destruction by explosion, blasting, or burning.
- No student shall place on any school premises with the intent of perpetrating a hoax, any device which would appear to a reasonable person to be a bomb or similar instrument capable of causing injury or damage.

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

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

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

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

**15. Sexual Harassment/Sexual Offenses**

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

involving sexual harassment shall report the incident to the principal.

## **Guidelines for Disciplinary Action**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Short-Term In-School Suspension**

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

#### **Short-Term Suspension (1-10 DAYS)**

A "short-term suspension" is a suspension from school for 1-10 school

days. This is a serious disciplinary action.

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

### **Long-Term Suspension** (More than 10 days)

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

The Principal of The Mountain Community School, with the prior approval of the of the Board of Directors, shall have the authority to suspend for periods of time in excess of 10 school days but not exceeding the time remaining in the school year, any pupil who willfully violates the policies of conduct established by the Board of Directors. The pupil and his/her parents may appeal the decision of the Principal and the Board of Directors. [Ref. G.S. 115C-391(c)]

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

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

### **Expulsion**

An expulsion is the permanent exclusion of a student from school. The Board of Directors has the authority to expel a student from school with the recommendation from the Principal. Other alternative education methods will be considered before an expulsion is decided upon. The expelled student is permanently prohibited from returning to the school unless the Board of Directors reverses its decision. A student may apply for readmission, but not before the July 1st, that is at least 6 months

after the expulsion date. The same due process procedures as a long-term suspension apply except the student may appeal the original decision to North Carolina Superior Court within thirty days.

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

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

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

### **Corporal Punishment**

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Rules Governing Long-Term Suspension**

In the event that a student with special needs exhibits behavior which, if the child were not a child with special needs, could result in the suspension or expulsion of the student from school for more than 10

days during the school year, the Board of Directors shall require a multidisciplinary team promptly to review the evaluation already completed for the student and conduct any additional evaluations necessary to determine if the behavior is caused by the student's special needs.

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

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

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

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

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

When a special needs student consistently demonstrates problematic behavior that could result in disciplinary suspensions, the multidisciplinary team should meet to review the IEP and consider adding or changing behavior goals and appropriate consequences for inappropriate behavior.

In the event a special needs student accumulates 10 days of suspension, the Principal must immediately initiate the school-based multidisciplinary committee meeting. No other suspension may be imposed until this meeting is held. In-school suspension should be treated the same as any other suspension, and the procedures outlined in Section .1523 of "Procedures Governing Programs and Services for Children with Special Needs, 1990" will apply. The only possible exception is in those few instances when in-school suspension is listed on the IEP as a behavior management strategy.

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

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

### **Dress Code Policy**

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