

Mountain Home Charter School

Parent Handbook



*"There is no place like home....
For learning"*

Bass Lake Joint Union Elementary School District

Congratulations on your child's enrollment in Mountain Home Charter School and welcome!

If you are new to our school, prepare yourself and family for an outstanding learning and growing time. Teaching your children in your home requires a significant commitment from the whole family, not just from mom. All family members, including dad and siblings have their part to play. In fact, schooling in the home becomes a defining element of what the family is and does. It sets new time priorities and schedules. It dominates at least one of the parent's day to day life. It requires a certain financial commitment. It necessitates an ongoing dedication to and involvement with learning new things, and this not merely for the home-schooled student. Finally, home schooling or "personalized learning" as we like to call it will bring your family into a whole new social group of friends and acquaintances who, like you, have taken on the obligation to educate their children in their homes.

All of this being true, it is equally true that home based, personalized learning is not only very effective but also tremendously rewarding for the whole family. The students gain a first rate education tailor made to their strengths and weaknesses, thus they may push ahead where they are able and they may slow down where they need. The child's education is founded upon the most effective child training method yet devised (dad and mom raising their children). Brothers and sisters grow up together sharing the same experiences and become each other's best friends, fights and all. Parents gain a growing awareness of their special privilege in knowing and raising their children. Families become more whole.

Our job here at Mountain Home Charter School is to provide you with the resources you need to accomplish the job you desire to do with excellence. We provide you with four types of resources. First we provide your family with **guidance** from professional, credentialed and experienced teachers. Second, we conduct **classes** and **field trips** taught and led by our teachers and designed around our students' needs and interests. Third, we supply you with a wide variety of **curriculum** and **learning materials**. Finally, Mountain Home Charter School is a forum and meeting place for home-schooling families. Thus we provide you a **network** of other families pursuing similar goals as yours.

This handbook is intended to give you a short introduction to how Mountain Home's program works. It is not a complete overview of our program nor does it provide an answer for all questions. (We have a longer version of this handbook with more detail available upon your request). Perhaps the best place to get the answers you need is from the staff at school or other "veteran" parents.

Please take some time to familiarize yourself with the contents of this handbook and keep it handy for future reference.

Again, welcome to Mountain Home Charter School!

Michael Cox, Principal

Mountain Home Charter School Parent Handbook

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Mountain Home Charter School – A Resource Center

Our school is located in Oakhurst and is part of the Bass Lake Joint Union Elementary School District. Since the school is centrally located we call Mountain Home Charter School the "Resource Center." All *resources*, including the charter teachers, are available in this *central* location.

Resource List:

Codes:

- * = Can be checked out for home use.
- # = Can be copied for your use.
- + = Must stay on site but, can be used while at MHSC

Equipment:

- + copy machine.
- + binding machine
- + paper cutter
- + computers
- + Ellison Dye Cutter
- + Kiln

Books:

- * textbooks and teacher's guides in all subject areas at all grade levels
- *# supplementary materials (such as study guides and test books)
- * special workbooks (such as handwriting and vocabulary)
- * library books
- * books on tape (primary and classics) - Listed in card catalog or audio file.
- *+ a few resource books (atlas, dictionary, etc.)
- *+ homeschooling books and copies of articles about homeschooling
- *+# curriculum resource books (literature units, science ideas, math drills, seasonal units, thematic units, black-line masters of maps, etc.) Only a limited amount of these may be checked out. Make sure the book you are taking has a card or a bar code.

Learning Aids:

- * math manipulatives (clock face, base ten blocks, tangrams, attribute blocks, counters, Cuisenaire Rods, geometric solids, etc.)
- * math equipment (digitor, meter sticks, measuring jars, balance, compasses, protractors, calculators, abacus, meter/yard wheel, etc.)
- * science equipment (microscopes, dissections kits, scales, thermometers, etc.)

- * science supplies (litmus paper, microscope slides and coverslips, flasks, petrie dishes, owl pellets, dissection animals, filter paper, and a few chemicals)
- * learning "games" and activities (puzzles, phonics games, Learning Wrap-Ups, flash cards, etc.)
- *+ audio and video tapes

Non consumable Items:

You may take these home to assist with your instruction but these items must be returned when you are finished. You are responsible for the replacement costs of these items if lost or destroyed.

Examples of non-consumables: Textbooks, rulers, yardsticks, meter sticks, scissors, individual chalkboards, protractors, compasses, etc.

Consumable Supplies:

You are not responsible for the replacement cost of these items.

Examples of consumable supplies: Pencils, paper, workbooks, paint, glue, crayons, construction paper, lined paper, drawing paper, etc.)

Services

The regular services available from traditional public school are available through Mountain Home Charter:

- health screening
- vision screening
- school pictures
- State Mandated testing
- Access to the County Instructional Media Center (IMC)
- Special Education – referral and assessment
- scoliosis screening
- hearing screening
- low cost accident insurance
- testing (for special programs)

How Do I Know What Is Happening, and When?

Following the Parent Meeting, a schedule of planned classes and events is sent out to all participating families through the monthly Newsletter.

Mountain Home Charter School’s entire master calendar is kept on a large white board in the main building. This calendar shows everything scheduled for the year and is updated as needed.

The Newsletter is sent out once a month. Each monthly newsletter contains a schedule of events for the following month. Attached to the back of each newsletter is a monthly calendar with class times and events marked in.

For updated ski information during our ski instruction season, you may dial 642-1425.

The Mountain Home website will be perhaps the best place to get updated school and event information. Our web address is www.mountainhomecharter.org. Our website is currently under construction. We hope it will be available for your convenience by December 2005.

What Requirements Do I Have to Fulfill?

1. You are responsible for the supervision of your student during normal BLJUESD school hours (8:30 a.m. - 2 p.m. on weekdays). If you are not available to supervise your child at that time the person who is responsible for supervision of your student must sign the Charter Agreement.
2. You are responsible for the transportation of your student to Progress Meetings, special classes, and other activities unless otherwise arranged. You must have appropriate insurance coverage on your vehicle to transport students, even your own.
3. Students in grades 1 through 8 should be instructed for a **minimum** of *20 hours* per week (four (4) hours daily). Kindergarten students should be instructed for *15 hours* weekly (three (3) hours daily). All students should receive a minimum of *180 days* of instruction per school year that matches our school calendar. Unusually high absence rates (more than 20 days per school year) are not acceptable.
4. Students should receive instruction in *all* the following subject areas (not required to cover all subject areas on a daily basis):
 - Language Arts (Reading, English Grammar, Writing, Spelling)
 - Mathematics
 - Science
 - Social Studies (Geography, History)
 - Fine Arts (Art, Drama, Dance, Music)
 - Physical Education: students are **required** to have at least 20 minutes daily
5. The charter teacher, parent, primary teacher and student must sign a written agreement at the beginning of enrollment.
6. The charter teacher, primary teacher, and student will work together to plan annual and interim goals.
7. The primary teacher and student ***must formally meet*** with the charter teacher at least once every 20 teaching days. This scheduled Progress Meeting will be scheduled by the primary teacher and Charter Teacher.
8. ***The primary teacher must notify the school or Charter Teacher prior to the meeting time if you and your student are unable to make the scheduled meeting.*** If you do not contact us you will be considered to be noncompliant. (See "Termination of Enrollment.")

9. The primary teacher must keep a file of all student work to share with the charter teacher at the scheduled Progress Meeting. The student and charter teacher will regularly review and maintain an assessment portfolio with work samples from all subject areas.
10. The primary teacher must sign to verify minimum daily attendance on the Daily Attendance sheet. **This form must be returned to the school within a strict time frame at the end of each school month. Failure to return attendance in a timely fashion is treated as non-compliance.** (See "Termination of Enrollment.")
11. The parent is responsible for all material checked out from MHCS. Because of MHCS's growing population the checkout period of resource materials, library books and equipment is a maximum of four (4) weeks. The parent will reimburse the school for any lost or damaged materials.
12. The parent **must** comply with all deadlines for return of materials which were borrowed from the Madera County's Instructional Media Center. IMC material not returned to MHCS on a timely basis are the responsibility of the parent. You may call Madera County Office of Education to make arrangements for the return of late items – (559) 673-6051 ext 275.
13. You will supply immunization and health reports (or waivers) upon request (for your student's cumulative file) in a timely manner.
14. Mountain Home Charter School must be informed if your student has an active *I.E.P.* (Individual Educational Program) from any other school prior to enrollment.
15. All students in 2nd through 8th grade are required to participate in annual standardized testing (during May). Kindergarten and 1st grade students are also given an end of year assessment. This is part of our charter.
16. Families who leave Mountain Home Charter School prior to the end of the school year must schedule and participate in an exit evaluation before withdrawing from the school. ***All books, materials, and equipment must be returned to the school at that time. Also, any lost or damaged items must be paid for at that time.***

Meetings with Your Charter Teacher

The reason for regular meetings with a Charter Teacher is *school accountability*. We have stated in our charter that we will have contact to evaluate student progress and to provide recommendations and assistance on a regular basis.

Initially, frequent visits (one each week) can help the new homeschooling family adjust to their new situation. By meeting more often the parent gets more support during this most difficult transition period. Once a family has established a regular routine and is more confident with homeschooling official visits can be scheduled less frequently, up to once every 20 school days.

You are *welcome* to visit MHCS any time during regular hours. You are **required** to come to your scheduled progress meeting. Because of the numbers of families and expanded schedule of activities we must adhere to a strict schedule. You and your charter teacher can agree upon a day and time for each scheduled progress meeting. It is *very* important that you do not miss a scheduled meeting.

Please have the following ready for your meeting:

- 1- Record of studies accomplished: This could be in the form of lesson plans, monthly journal, written list, or other records showing work completed.
- 2- All school work, tests, art project, photos of projects or student activity, completed since the last meeting.
- 3- Plans for the near future: These can be written down or be ready to discuss them.
- 4- You and your student(s): We regularly discuss learning with the students and use informal questioning to assess student progress.

Also, please tell us about:

Any questions you may have.

Equipment or materials you need.

Special news regarding your student.

What work samples should I bring?

What your charter teacher really needs to see is *proof of progress*.

You should bring in all work from each subject area to the scheduled meeting with your charter teacher. That way, you and the charter teacher can decide which samples will be kept for your student's portfolio.

Below are some *suggested* work samples from each subject which would be appropriate for the student portfolio.

Reading:

A complete/corrected page from a reading workbook.

A complete/corrected test.

A book report.

Primary: A picture about something from the story (w/wo a sentence about it).

Middle: A short book report.

Intermediate: A short or long report, focusing on the entire story or book, or on a single element, such as plot, characters, setting, etc.

Some other written or "artistic" response to a poem, short story, or book.

Language Arts:

A complete/corrected page from an English workbook/Language Exercise book.

A written page of English work.

A complete/corrected test.

A sample of good writing, corrected.

Primary: A picture with a sentence explaining it.

Middle: Spelling or English sentences, a paragraph, a short letter, a story, a short report, etc.

Intermediate: A story, poem, report, letter, essay, etc., from any subject area.

Social Studies:

A complete/corrected page from a social studies/geography/history workbook, study guide, or map activities packet.

A complete/corrected test.

A labeled map.

A report, model, collection of pictures, chart, poster or other artistic response to a topic in social studies.

A written response to current events or activities.

Mathematics:

A complete/corrected page from a mathematics textbook or workbook.

A complete/corrected test.

A handwritten page of problems complete/corrected.

A paragraph which explains how to solve a specific mathematics problem.

Science:

A complete/corrected page from a science workbook or study guide.

A complete/corrected test.

A written description of an experiment.

A labeled picture or diagram of some aspect studied in science (e.g. plant or animal

cell, parts of plant or flower, parts of an atom, types of levers, internal organs of humans or animals, growth chart, weather chart, ecosystem, water cycle, etc.)

A report, model, collection, or artistic response to a topic in science.

What Do I Teach?

In response to this question another question needs to be added *What Do You Want Your Child to Learn?* One of the reasons this school became a charter school was to allow for complete personalized learning. The primary teacher, the student, and the charter teacher can work together to determine annual goals. Know where you are going – that's the starting point,. The primary teacher and charter teacher can then work together to formulate a basic plan to guide the student to his/her annual goals.

Writing Individual Annual Goals

When you first meet with your charter teacher you will be writing annual goals for your student – what you want your student to accomplish by the end of the school year. These can be very simple to write or very difficult to write depending on the types of goals you want to set for your student.

Some rules you should consider about annual goal writing:

1. Make them measurable. Once you set a goal think about how it can be measured. Even teachers who have to think in terms of goals more frequently than you sometimes forget to make the goals measurable on a continuum.. They instead make the goal a "Yes" or "No" type. This type of goal can not be obtained unless it is done perfectly. It's all or nothing? Even if the student did 70%, 85%, or 98% of what needed to be done, they didn't achieve the 100% goal. **A measurable goal gives the student something to shoot for without dismissing the effort needed to get there.** The real learning generally takes place on the way to obtaining goals.
2. Make them obtainable for your child. Be realistic. Don't make them too easy to obtain but don't put them so far above their ability that they become frustrated in attempting them. You should be flexible, and the goals should be flexible too.
3. We are interested in academic goals but they aren't the only goals to consider. For instance, you may want your child to become more helpful in the home, more active in the community, more confident in public, etc. These are all good measurable goals that help to make a well-rounded individual. They are also describing skills that are learned. Yes, they can be part of your student's annual goals.

Grade Level Expectations

There will be many families who are new to homeschooling who will have no idea where to begin. Although they know they want to homeschool, they have not read up on what is to be learned at each grade or age. That is exactly what your Mountain Home Charter School teacher is for! We provide grade level objectives which are tied to California learning standards. The standards provide a starting place for recommended learning. However, if you wish to emphasize different learning objectives, that is your prerogative. Your charter teacher can help you go further in the curriculum or to slow down depending on the learning needs of your child.

What if my child is above or below grade level in one or more subject areas? Many children are not exactly on grade level in all academic areas. That's fine, they all are different. That's one of the advantages of personalized education, you can address your student's *learning needs* not his/her *grade level*.

If your student is below grade level in a subject teach them the concepts that they need to learn. Don't try to teach them at grade level. It will only frustrate them and you. *Learning* doesn't happen when students are frustrated.

There are three main levels in learning.

1. ***Review*** takes place when a student understands the concept completely. A student must have some practice and rehearsal to *learn* a concept. However, by going over and over *what they already know*, they only get *review*. This *isn't* really *learning*.

This is why one-on-one education works so well. You don't need to do a lot of review if your student understands the idea or concept. You can tell when you have reached this stage. It comes just after the student gets all problems correct, gets all

spelling words correct, gets all answers in science correct, etc. – and it comes just before the phrase, "I'm bored!" or "This is boring!"

2. **Learning** takes place when a student encounters an idea or concept that they can begin to understand by using past experience, stored knowledge, or newly developed skills. Learning takes place in the student and you sometimes don't see it happen. That's why we have students perform things like practice and rehearsal. These elements of learning show that the learning is understood and can be applied. If the student does not get correct answers in practice and rehearsal learning didn't take place. When this occurs, it's time to back up and try the idea from a different approach.

We don't learn something by doing it once. Most of us need to practice new ideas and concepts and skills. Learning research says that it takes 8 to 16 rehearsals for most people to learn a new idea or skill. Research also shows that if you learn to do something incorrectly it will take many more rehearsals of the correct learning to replace the incorrect learning. That is why it is so difficult to change a habit.

3. **Frustration** happens when a student is not ready to learn a new concept or idea because they do not have the background knowledge or skills to attempt it. No amount of rehearsals will help them learn it. They are simply not ready. You'll have to back up and prepare them by giving them what they are missing.

How Do I Teach The Curriculum?

Actually, how you teach is dependent upon at least two factors:

1. How your child learns. Each child has strengths and weaknesses with different styles of teaching. Some learn best from hands-on, some from listening, some from seeing or watching.
2. What you feel comfortable with. If you aren't into doing a lot of active hands-on presentations, you probably won't offer them to your child. On the other hand, you may really love using videos, interesting illustrated books, or talking/interviewing persons with knowledge.

What we list as curriculum planning options below are separate philosophical approaches to teaching. Maybe you'll find they match your philosophy. That gives you a place to start.

Curriculum Philosophy and Instructional Planning:

There are currently three popular homeschool curriculum philosophies which many of our families espouse and which Mountain Home supports. One is a **traditional approach** based on schedules, textbooks, workbooks and tests. The second is a more **open curriculum** based on the student needs or themes, eclectic materials, activities and projects. The third is the **classical** approach.

Curriculum Philosophy 1:

The Traditional Approach

Most primary teachers just starting out in homeschooling tend to *stick with what they know*, that being the traditional education similar to what they experienced as students themselves. They are familiar with the routine and the expected outcomes. If you plan on using this type of curriculum here are some suggested procedures for planning your school year:

1. Get familiar with the State Standards, textbooks, teacher guides and additional materials
2. You will have school for 180 days or 36 weeks. Instead of planning on a daily or weekly basis, start on a much broader plan. One good way to start is to look at monthly goals.
3. Make yourself a chart similar to the one below. Look at your calendar and under **Month #1** write in the dates for the first four *complete* weeks of school. Under **Month #2** write the dates for the next four *complete* weeks, etc.

Subject	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6	Month 7	Month 8	Month 9	Month 10
Reading										
Lang. Spelling										
Social Studies										
Science										
Math										
Fine Arts										
Physical Ed.										

4. Look at the *flavor* of each month. For instance, the month containing October 12th, Columbus Day, is an ideal time to cover any material dealing with exploration, navigation, etc. Late October to early November is a good time to introduce material

concerning government and elections, or autumn and deciduous trees, or migration of animals and insects, etc.

5. Look at the seasons/weather for each month. For instance, it is easier to teach about plants in the early fall or late spring when there are lots of plants alive. It is difficult to study weather when we are having our normal sunshine. So study weather in January and February when there will probably be clouds, rain or snow.
6. Eliminate. Many students are already familiar with some of the material in their textbooks. Some books have several chapters of review material. Decide what material you do not need to cover.
7. Decide what material you do plan to study: the areas you *need* to cover and the areas you *want* to cover. If you want a rigid schedule, you should look for planning charts in teacher editions which show recommended time allotments for lessons and chapters. Always allow for some flexibility in your planning.
8. Some material lends itself to easy planning. Spelling, for instance, can be done a unit each week. That's four units each month. You can go from the front of the book to the back, you can skip around. (Some people plan two units each week, that's not recommended since to *learn* the brain needs to *rehearse or practice*, usually eight to sixteen times. That means that the spelling words should be rehearsed in various ways, *not* rushed.)
9. **Using a pencil**, write in the chapters and units you plan to cover each month. If there are 12 chapters in a book you can cover a chapter every three weeks. If there are 24 chapters in a book you can cover a chapter every week and a half.

You do not need to do most textbooks in order, from cover to cover. You can skip around. The exceptions are *history*, which should be chronologically presented, *mathematics*, some chapters use concepts learned in the previous chapter, and *skills* like handwriting which builds upon itself. Use a pencil because you will probably make several changes to this plan as you get more familiar with our child's abilities and with your new role.

10. Using what you have written make your lesson plan for the first week. Here are the **RULES OF THUMB** for weekly lessons:

Math: 2 pages/day (with workbook, if more practice is needed)

English: One lesson/day (with workbook if more practice is needed)
A minimum of one writing activity/week

Spelling: One unit/week with additional activities to practice words
(such as sentence writing)

Science: 7th and 8th grades only: One lesson/day (with study guide to apply knowledge). K - 6th grades: One topic/month

Social Studies: K - 3rd grades: One topic/month (use of literature books is recommended, see the Social Studies Literature Guide). 4th - 8th grades: One chapter/two weeks (with study guide and map activities)

Physical Education: You must plan for 20 minutes/day. P.E. is more than just play. Large and small muscle activities, sport skills and rules, movement and exercise are all part of P.E. Topics in Health are also part of P.E.

Fine Arts: Plan for variety. Don't forget to include "art appreciation" in your curriculum. Try to schedule a minimum of one fine art activity or experience and one art appreciation lesson/week

Reading: This is a very individual thing. How fast you move through a textbook will depend on your student's ability. Recommendation is that all children read literature books, as many as possible. No less than one/month in 1st - 3rd grades, no less than two/month in 4th - 8th grades

****Remember that these are all suggestions not written rules.***

Curriculum Philosophy 2:

Open Curriculum

This curriculum approach is based on the philosophy that children are active learners – given the opportunity to learn, they will learn. What a child *wants* to learn about is very important in this curriculum. It is, in fact, the foundation of the curriculum. This does not mean that the child will not learn what is expected for his/her grade level.

This type of curriculum demands a flexible schedule and a wide variety of resources. When used in classrooms it is often presented in *centers*, areas dedicated to subjects (a math center, a language center, an art center, etc.). In each center items, books and worksheets are *made available* to students. The contents of the centers are changed at regular intervals. Students spend some time in each center and show that the time was spent productively through products: journals, oral reports, worksheets or other completed work.

When some homeschoolers use open – or student led – curriculum neither the materials nor schedule are planned. When the child wants to learn about a subject the parent provides opportunities, materials and experiences to facilitate the learning. For instance, if a child is interested in learning about bears the parents will provide the child with books about bears (at all levels). The parent will guide the child into learning where bears live and what they eat. The child may see movies that include bears. The child will be encouraged to do art activities with a bear theme. A zoo will be visited so that the

child can see bears and compare them to other animals. The child will probably imitate bear walks and sounds. The child may make a life size poster of a bear.. The child may write to individuals or organizations for more information on bears and laws which do or do not protect them. And so on . . .

There are activities in every area of the curriculum included above. Parents who choose this type of curriculum can be accountable by keeping a journal or a list and samples of work. Your charter teacher may use informal inventories to determine if your student is attaining minimum objectives for ability, age or grade level.

Curriculum Philosophy 3:

Classical Approach

This approach originated in Ancient Greece and has survived to modern times. It focuses on teaching the tools of learning to study any subject. These tools are known as the *Trivium* (*grammar, logic, and rhetoric* [the creative use of language]), followed by the study of the *Quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music). This approach was modernized by the English writer Dorothy Sayers, who modified it into a system which teaches these subjects concurrently but divided into phases that correspond to the three stages of the *Trivium* begun at strategic points in the mental development of the child. Thus the child's elementary years are considered the *grammar* stage in which the rules of language are emphasized. The child's middle school years are considered the *logic* stage in which the formal rules of logic are emphasized. In other words the student is taught how to think logically and critically. The high school years are considered the *rhetoric* stage in which the emphasis is placed on persuasive communication, both oral and written.

So putting this all together, it works something like this. As young children, students are taught the formal rules of language using much memorization at a time when memorization is easy for them. In the middle years the student takes the formal structure that they have already learned and now begin to apply rules of logic so that they may connect and reason with what they know. This stage is intentionally placed during the young teenage years because it fits well with the adolescent's desire to question and argue. During the final stage, the high school age student pulls all that has been gained from the grammar and rhetoric stages and now practices and perfects the ability to communicate one's excellent thinking.

Throughout the student's classical education, a special emphasis is placed upon the study of history and upon the reading, questioning and responding to *classical literature*. Mrs. Sayers wrote, "...that although we often succeed in teaching our pupils 'subjects,' we fail lamentably on the whole in teaching them how to think: they learn everything, except the art of learning...For the sole true end of education is simply this: to teach men how to learn for themselves; and whatever instruction fails to do this is effort spent in vain."

So What Works Best?

What works best, is what works for you and your child. What we see used most often is some combination of the three approaches we just discussed.

Most of our homeschool parents choose to use textbooks. Quite often the textbooks become the starting point for learning. When the information in the book stops, other types of learning can be pursued. Most of our parents combine textbook curriculum with *thematic teaching*. Although this is similar to what is described in *open curriculum*, it is not always student initiated. Parents usually have some topics that they would like to teach that may not be covered in the textbooks or may not be covered *well* in the text books.

Much thematic learning is done on a family basis, not just for individual students. Primary teachers find out some of the topics their students are interested in studying, think of topics they would like to teach, and find other areas of interest in text books and in looking through the files at the Resource Center. It is usually best to plan ahead when considering teaching to a theme. It often takes time to find all the resources you may need to make this type of teaching successful.

Sometimes themes are based on literature. For instance, reading *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* may lead to studying about Missouri, the Mississippi River, floods, levies, caves, superstitions, early medicine, house paint/white wash, slavery, American history in the mid-1800s, geography of the midwest, Samuel Clemens, or any number of related topics. You can see that this topic can be used in the curriculum areas of language arts (English, writing, reading, spelling), social studies (history, geography, current events), science (biology, physical science, earth science), and the fine arts (music, art, drama, dance). With a little stretch, you could also incorporate math (measurement, problem solving) and physical education.

Instead of stretching to make your themes fit each curriculum area, enjoy it in all the areas where it fits easily and plan lessons from textbooks in the other curriculum areas. Quite often it is difficult to make math a part of a theme. You can certainly bring in some activities which use math, but don't get frustrated trying to make your curriculum match a theme perfectly.

Every Subject Every Day?

Life is not perfect. We really don't expect you to devise a scheme which allows you to cover all curriculum areas every day. It is required that your student is instructed in the basics of reading, writing, and mathematics. We want your children to stay physically fit. We hope that you will introduce your children to science, social studies, and the arts, but they are not required. Your personal requirements are based on the annual goals you will help to write for your students.

Quite frankly, there are creative ways to cover all curricular areas. For instance, we have seen centers used quite effectively in the home instruction environment. Usually, the centers are limited to two or three areas of the curriculum. Sometimes the "subject" of the center changes to meet new needs. For instance, a reading center is quite common,

and we recommend it when you have children who do not *like* to read. In an area away from the television, you provide several books and magazines, a comfortable chair or big pillow, good lighting, maybe a tape recorder to read aloud into or for listening to books-on-tape. If you have no problem with readers, but can't get your children to write, maybe a writing center, with some colorful stationery or some plain paper bound in interesting book covers, is in order.

When you are teaching *new* concepts to your students it is very important to present them *one-on-one*. When you need your student to review or practice something (like writing, spelling words, or math facts) or when you would like them to experiment (like art and science), a center is a good way to provide for this type of learning.

Another way of instructing in all areas without working in every subject every day is to alternate subjects. Many people will work on the three Rs daily, while focusing on science one week and social studies the next. Some people use Fridays as fine arts and physical education day. The main idea is to provide a well-rounded education for your children.

Daily Attendance Accounting

Attendance accounting is important to the existence of our school. Our operating funds come about from the attendance of children. We receive revenue based strictly on enrollment and how many days of attendance for each student.

Being a charter school where students stay home to accomplish their education raises questions about actual *attendance*. How do we count attendance for children who don't actually physically attend a classroom? Well, we base our attendance on two things: Parental accounting for the required time spent in home instruction and the judgement of the charter teachers.

Keeping Attendance Records

Our attendance accounting system begins with the parent. You must keep track of how many regular school days (See the Calendar) you instructed your child for at least the minimum amount of time required (See "What Requirements Must I Fulfill?"). You'll teach nearly every day. In fact, you will probably teach more than the required 180 school days. Many families teach on weekends and during holiday and summer breaks, however, **We can only count the days listed on the calendar as regular days of instruction.**

We do not receive revenue for days when a child has an "excused absence," such as an illness, a doctor's appointment, a funeral, etc. If you do not teach your child because he/she is ill, you cannot count this as a day of instruction. If you take a regular school day off to go shopping and do not accomplish the minimum instruction time for the day you cannot count this as a day of instruction. If you go shopping in the morning and make up school in the afternoon and evening you can count this day. The time when the instruction takes place does not have to be during the traditional time period. However,

we do caution you that consistency is important, particularly with small children, when it comes to learning.

We use the Daily Attendance form for attendance accounting. Soon after you enroll for the school year, you will receive a packet of accounting forms for each month of the school year.

- 1. Sign (no initials please) for each day the child was instructed for at least the minimum amount of time.**
- 2. Sign and mark absent if a student was not instructed on a regular school day.**
- 3. Return the attendance form to the school by the due date at the bottom of the form.**

If you forget to mail your form, your charter teacher will call with a reminder. If, for some reason, the form is lost, your teacher will ask you to *come in* and fill out a duplicate.

Termination of Enrollment

Bass Lake Joint Union Elementary School District has specific policies concerning student suspension and expulsion. In addition to these, Mountain Home Charter School will terminate a student's enrollment for the following reasons:

Non-compliance:

If the parent, primary teacher, or student is not fulfilling the requirements of the written agreement.

Example - No work samples supplied.

Example - Missing scheduled meetings.

Example - Student not accomplishing reasonable amount of work.

Example - Attendance Sheet not returned by the due date.

NOTE: You will be given reasonable opportunities to correct any non-compliance issues. Bass Lake Joint Union Elementary School District Administrative Regulations

(AR 0420.4) detail the three stages that must be completed to terminate the enrollment of a student.

Other reasons for voluntarily termination of your student's enrollment are:

Inappropriate Placement:

Example - Student is unhappy/unsuccessful in this option. Although this condition can often be improved by working closely with a charter teacher, the initial excitement of homeschooling sometimes disappears completely for a child who is lonely, works better with groups than as an individual, or cannot accept a

parent as a teacher. *This is more likely to occur with a child who has been **happy** in a traditional classroom.*

Example - Parent does not have time to spend schooling one-on-one. Often the economic situation in the home requires that both parents work. Some self-motivated students can be successful in this situation, but most students are not. Also, *a child cannot be left unattended during school time* even if they are doing school work.

Lack of Success:

Although many people try homeschooling not all are successful at it. Many people feel they are not doing a good job of home-schooling initially but they usually *catch on* in a few months. Your charter teacher will assist parents and allow time for them to adjust to their new role. If, after a reasonable time, the charter teacher does not see success he/she will recommend another educational option.

Withdrawing Your Student: The Exit Evaluation

Whether we are terminating your student's enrollment or you are withdrawing your student from our school you must attend an exit evaluation. At the meeting your student will complete a final assessment. This allows us to close out all paperwork on your student before sending records on to their next school.

You must turn in all books, materials, and equipment at the time of the exit evaluation!