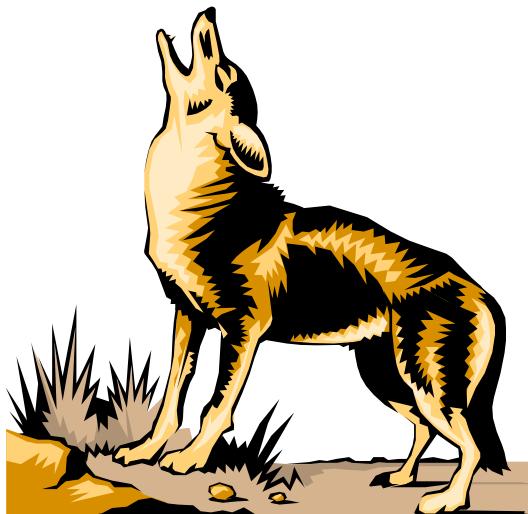


Mountain Home School Charter Parent Handbook

2013-2014



"There's no place like home...For learning!"

Western Sierra Charter Schools

www.mountainhomecharter.org

**41267 Highway 41
Oakhurst, CA 93644
P: 559.642.1422
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WELCOME LETTER

Congratulations on your child's enrollment in Mountain Home School Charter 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 could 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 School Charter 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 School Charter 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. 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 School Charter!

Michael Cox, Executive Director



STAFF CONTACTS

Call 559-642-1422 and enter one of the following extensions:

Name	Extension
Michael Cox, Executive Director mcox@mountainhomecharter.org	1
Mindy Klang, Principal/Charter Teacher mklang@mountainhomecharter.org	15

Charter Teachers:

Kathi Bales - kbales@mountainhomecharter.org	12
Brook Bullock – bbullock@mountainhomecharter.org	20
Joanne Cable - jcable@mountainhomecharter.org	30
Denise Cudd – dcudd@mountainhomecharter.org	18
Eric Hagen - ehagen@mountainhomecharter.org	16
Joanie Madaus - jmadaus@mountainhomecharter.org	13
Kim Meeks - kmeeks@mountainhomecharter.org	19
John Rumohr – jrumohr@mountainhomecharter.org	17
Cheryle Wilhite, School Secretary cwilhite@mountainhomecharter.org	2
Michele Williams, Librarian mwilliams@mountainhomecharter.org	22

**You may email by clicking on a staff picture or
name on our website contact list:
mountainhomecharter.org**

Our fax number is 559-642-1592

RESOURCES

Our school is located in Oakhurst and is part of the Yosemite Unified School District. Since the school is centrally located we call Mountain Home School Charter 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 (students must have permission of the charter teacher)
- + Ellison Dye Cutter

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 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 that we may carry:

- * math manipulatives (clock face, base ten blocks, tangrams, attribute blocks, counters, Cuisineaire 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, magnets, rock and mineral kits, 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, Lyrical Science, Foreign Language curriculum, 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 | scoliosis screening |
| vision screening | hearing screening |
| school pictures | student accident insurance |
| State Mandated testing | testing (for special programs) |
| Access to the County Instructional Media Center (ERS) | |
| Special Education – referral and assessment | |

COMMUNICATION ---

At the beginning of each school year, a master schedule of classes is available for students and parents. The schedule is then broken down to times and dates of classes/events and can be found on the school website calendar at www.mountainhomecharter.org.

A monthly newsletter is also posted on the website which updates and announces event and class schedules for the following month.

If you require a hard copy of this newsletter, please contact your charter teacher.

Occasionally, you may receive a recorded phone call with pertinent information. These may include cancellations, field trips, events, etc.

For updated ski information during our ski instruction season, you may dial 642-1422 and listen to the announcement at extension 5. You may also contact Eric Hagen at 642-1422, ext 20.

REQUIREMENTS

1. You are responsible for the supervision of your student during normal Mountain Home School hours.
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 (4 hours daily). Kindergarten students should be instructed for *15 hours* weekly (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 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 on time is treated as non-compliance. (See "Termination of Enrollment.")

11. The parent is responsible for all material checked out from MHSC. Due to MHSC's growing population, the checkout period of resource materials, library books, and equipment is a maximum of 4 weeks (This excludes yearly curriculum). 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 MHSC on a timely basis are the responsibility of the parent. You may call Madera County Office of Education to make arrangements for extension or the return of late items – (559) 673-6051 ext 275.
13. You will supply birth certificate, immunization, and health and dental reports (or waivers), TB test within 90 days of enrollment (or waiver), proof of residence upon request (for your student's cumulative file) in a timely manner.
14. Mountain Home School Charter 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 April/ 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 School Charter 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.***

ASSESSMENTS AND TESTING ---

Every student will be assessed at the beginning and at the end of the year. Students may also be assessed in the middle of the year. Charter teachers will work with the parents to use the results the assessments to help set goals and objectives. We also use this information to record progress.

Students in grades 3-8 are required to participate in the Smarter Balanced testing that occurs during April or May.

MEETINGS ---

The reason for regular meetings with a Charter Teacher is *school accountability*. We have stated in our charter that we will evaluate student progress and 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 MHSC 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.

SAMPLES ---

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. All work should be corrected. You and the charter teacher can decide which samples will be kept for your student's portfolio. A minimum of 4 samples in different subject areas will be collected. On the following pages 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 (with or without 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 can also be used.

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 with all work/steps shown
- 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 STUDENT GOALS

When you first meet with your charter teacher you will be writing semester goals for your student – what you want your student to accomplish by the end of each school semester. 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 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 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 School Charter 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.

TEACHING CURRICULUM

There are a few things to consider when choosing curriculum for your student.

1. How does your child learn? 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 do 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.
3. There are different homeschool curriculum philosophies that different families choose to use. If you are interested in learning more about these philosophies, please feel free to contact a charter teacher.

Although it may be easy to become overwhelmed with the various subjects and the amount of curriculum, be assured, there are creative ways to cover all curricular areas. Your personal requirements are based on the goals you will help to write for your students.

One way of instructing in all areas without working in every subject every day is to alternate subjects. Many people will work on the three R's 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.

ATTENDANCE

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? We base our attendance on two things: Parental accounting for the required time spent in home instruction and the judgment 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 you instructed your child for at least the minimum amount of time required (See "Requirements"). 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 and attendance 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. If you lose this packet, you may print-out the forms you need from the school website: www.mountainhomecharter.org

- 1. In blue or black ink, 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 your charter teacher 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. Failure to turn in the attendance will result in non-compliance.

ON SITE CLASSES

Mountain Home School offers a variety of onsite classes. Most of these classes are enrichment and not intended to take the place of the schooling the parent is doing with the student at home. Some of these classes in the past have included art, music, science, geography, and math activities. We also offer some classes that assist in curriculum. These classes have included writing and higher level mathematics.

Upcoming classes will be noted in the current newsletter. Sign-ups for classes are usually located on the sign-up board at MHSC.

TERMINATION OF ENROLLMENT

Yosemite Unified School District has specific policies concerning student suspension and expulsion. In addition to these, Mountain Home School Charter 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.

(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.