

***MOUNTAIN DISCOVERY CHARTER SCHOOL
PARENT-EDUCATOR PARTNERSHIP
(PEP)***



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INTRODUCTION

MDCS begins with the assumption that every child has not only the natural ability to learn, but also the propensity and desire to learn. The primary responsibility is not to teach students *how* to learn, but to recognize the ways in which they learn, and in turn, to give each one the opportunity to learn. It is the school's belief that in a school where different learning styles are addressed, children will readily achieve academically ambitious expectations.

The Parent-Educator Partnership (PEP) will support the school's belief that every child has a right to a quality education and that children learn best when given the opportunity to link what they are learning with real world experiences in an atmosphere that is safe, stimulating and challenging. PEP will help bring our parents and community into our school as partners in education. We will support and honor our Family Partnership Agreements.

Our purpose is to support the MDCS mission, educational focus and its six common anchors by serving the school community and actively participating in the growth of MDCS. We will:

- Promote a sense of community
- Provide strong communications between the parent body and students, staff, and the Board of Directors
- Aid the school through support in the classrooms, administrative tasks and school activities
- Fund a PEP budget to support its own activities and enhance MDCS educational efforts

MDCS MISSION

We believe that empowering our students empowers our community.

The students of Mountain Discovery Charter School are actively engaged in an experientially rich, hands-on course of study developed to maximize each child's potential to become a responsible citizen of the local and global communities. Parents, students, teachers and staff are dedicated to:

- Fostering individual learning styles to reach ambitious academic goals.
- Nurturing and facilitating our children's natural abilities to think creatively and critically.
- Promoting self-confidence through respect for self, others, and the environment.

MDCS EDUCATIONAL FOCUS

MDCS will create an educational environment where students are inspired to academic discovery and excellence through an emphasis on experiential learning designed to honor individuality and diversity, nurture respect for self, others, and the environment, and to foster a lifelong love of learning.

MDCS COMMON ANCHORS

Academic excellence - This will be the paramount expectation for every student. We expect students to develop a core body of shared knowledge providing a solid, coherent foundation of learning, while allowing flexibility to meet the varying needs of each individual.

A committed circle of educators - We will expect our teachers to commit every day to serving and challenging the whole child, emotionally, mentally, socially, and physically. Parents, who we acknowledge as a child's first and foremost teachers, will be expected to contribute life experience, knowledge, and talents. In addition, we intend to partner with the community to offer a network of technology and human services.

Provide opportunities for children to acquire not just knowledge, but a deep experience related to the world around them. Our instructional approach will provide real-life applications for newly-presented material, and place skills in context. In order to enhance and strengthen basic academic objectives, each child will be given the opportunity and strongly encouraged to learn three skills that will complement and strengthen his or her course of study. These will be to exhibit competency in a handicraft, communicate in a second language, and to play a musical instrument.

Integrate maximum use of our geographic location. The neighboring Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Nantahala National Forest and Qualla Boundary of the Cherokee Indian Nation offer unparalleled opportunities for learning experiences that integrate our comprehensive curriculum and promote our community circle. At MDCS we intend to make full use of our natural history, southern Appalachian heritage, and multi-cultural resources.

Add value not only to our students' own lives but also to the lives of others. By developing and modeling a fundamental respect for diversity by teaching tolerance and appreciation for our differences, and by seeking knowledge through these differences, our students, parents, teachers and community will foster an all-inclusive learning environment. Through our curriculum and instructional approach we will offer many opportunities for our school community to contribute to the welfare of the larger community.

Foster a sense of pride in accomplishment. If children are to become productive, active citizens, they need the confidence and the capacity to take risks and meet the increasingly difficult challenges of our world. Our instructional approach is designed to meet this goal.

Parent-Educator Partnership Agreement (PEP)

The Mountain Discovery Charter School program is designed to nourish and facilitate the natural and individual abilities of each child in reaching ambitious academic goals in a multifaceted hands-on course of study. For that design to succeed, it must extend beyond the classroom walls to recognize and incorporate the home and family as vital parts of the process. Mountain Discovery Charter School recognizes that:

1. Parent and family participation maximizes student learning
2. Early involvement of parents in their child's education is essential and establishes patterns and practices that will last a lifetime
3. Home and community are vital extensions of the learning environment
4. Families bring culture, language and values that connect home and school
5. Parents are empowered when involved as full partners in ongoing relationships with teachers
6. Partnerships between schools and families benefit the child, the family, and the school

Correspondingly, parents are asked to sign the PEP Agreement. The Parent-Educator Partnership Agreement is designed to promote full partnership between families and school for the benefit of our children. It cements the family-school connection.

The **Parent-Educator Partnership** is an agreement between the school and parents for the benefit of children. If at any time either party believes the other to be falling short of its responsibility, a conference may be called. The purposes of this conference will be to ease misunderstandings and promote successful interaction between parent and school. It is Mountain Discovery's goal to empower parents in empowering their children.

Parent-Educator Partnership

“Parent involvement is the key to unlocking the potential of students and schools; when parents, students and teachers sit down together the learning curve rises and education becomes part of the student’s whole life.”

Peter W. Cookson, Center for Educational Outreach and Innovation

Student _____ Date _____

The Family-School Connection

The Mountain Discovery Charter School program is designed to nourish and facilitate the natural and individual abilities of each child. For that design to succeed, it must extend beyond the classroom walls to recognize and incorporate the home and family as vital parts of the process. By virtue of enrolling a child in MDCS, parents automatically become a part of the Parent-Educator Partnership.

Mountain Discovery Charter School’s Pledge to Parents

- Provide a program of academic excellence that fulfills the goals expressed in our mission statement.
- Provide a safe and supportive environment for learning.
- Communicate regularly with parents regarding their child’s progress and needs.
- Assist parents in meeting their obligation to their child’s educational needs and their responsibilities to the school.
- Continually reflect on, evaluate and develop the learning environment.

Students agree to:

- Attend school as scheduled and arrive on time.
- Provide a note from parent or guardian upon return in the event of absence.
- Obey the rules and regulations of the school.
- Be courteous, obedient, and respectful to school staff and personnel.
- Be respectful and considerate of classmates.
-

Parents’ Pledge to the School

- Read, understand, and support the mission of Mountain Discovery Charter School.
- Support school improvement initiatives.
- Provide a home environment that nurtures a love of learning.
- Ensure your child is at school on time with appropriate materials.
- Send notes in the day following any absence.
- Provide a nutritious lunch each day for my child.
- Attend parent/teacher/student conferences, and be available for contact with staff on a regular basis.
- Participate with my child in regular at-home learning activities as either directed by my child’s teacher, my child, or myself.
- Encourage reading every day.
- Support the school’s expectations of my child.
- Volunteer 6 hours per quarter, in whatever way possible

PEP GOALS FOR SUPPORTING THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

- Welcome and encourage parent involvement in school and PEP events.
- Provide information to parents about school and PEP events.
- Welcome new families into the MDCS community and help coordinate “Parent Partners”.
- Provide opportunities for parent networking.
- Provide events for the benefit of the students and the school.
- Assist the school in providing educational workshops for parents.
- Identify PEP volunteer needs and aid staff in filling them.
- Help maintain an attractive campus.
- Support and encourage parents to meet with faculty and administration.
- Schedule meetings at convenient times.
- Provide a forum to meet with administration, including input to the School Director, prior to significant policy or instructional changes.
- Provide a forum for proactive discussion of use of PEP funds
- Make formal recommendations to the School Director.
- Recommend parent representatives to standing or other committees and other bodies of the school.
- Encourage volunteers to work in classrooms, libraries, and media centers, and to help with administrative tasks.
- Assist in providing extracurricular activities for students.
- Support the training of parent volunteers.
- Aid in providing social opportunities for students and support student social committees.
- Aid in providing educational enrichment for students through speakers and programs.
- Express parent appreciation to the faculty.

IDEAS for PARENT VOLUNTEERS

- Serve as parental involvement coordinator or community volunteer coordinator
- Coordinate fundraising efforts
- Volunteer in the classroom
- Tutor students
- Assist teachers in locating and obtaining unique educational materials
- Share a special interest, ability or experience (music, art, sports, foreign language, etc.)
- Share cultural traditions through storytelling, demonstration or food
- Provide an outdoor learning experience
- Share special knowledge of the outdoors
- Build or repair furniture or equipment
- Implement an art activity
- Make props or costumes for productions
- Provide a break for a secretary, teacher, or teacher's assistant
- Offer clerical assistance
- Assist with lunch or special events
- Help organize a special event, field trip, or visit by community members
- Telephone other parents about upcoming events
- Act as a greeter at family night activities
- Lead activities for children during parent meetings
- Locate door prizes for parent meetings
- Assist with transportation and field trips
- Help with fundraising, grant writing, etc.
- Help maintain grounds
- Help a child with special needs participate in a physical or outdoor activity
- Organize a recycling program.

COMMITTEES

- Grounds and Beautification: work with parents, students, and staff to maintain and improve the school campus.
- Arts: coordinate the art enrichment programs for the school.
- Staff Appreciation: sponsor events during the year to demonstrate that the teachers' work is appreciated.
- Community Service: coordinate opportunities for students to serve their community.
- Health and Safety: assist the administration in maintaining a safe school for students.
- Fundraising: plan major fundraising events

Committees or task forces may be voted active or inactive by the PEP. A regular PEP meeting can create other committees as it sees fit.

Any PEP activity involving school resources must be planned in conjunction with and approved by the School Director.

Policies and Procedures

Policy Title I: Purpose of Parent-Educator Partnership

Responsible Area: Parent-Educator Partnership

All Parents or legal guardians of MDCS students are members of the Parent-Educator Partnership. The Parent-Educator Partnership provides a vehicle for broader involvement in the school by community members, parents, students, and staff. Committee members will be responsible for:

- coordinating volunteers;
- providing a voice for parents and other community members;
- working with the School Director and the Board of Directors to achieve the mission of MDCS.

PEP is a body of parents and educators capable of making its own decisions. However, as a group in the school, PEP adheres to all policies and procedures of MDCS and operates in accordance with the MDCS by-laws, and is subject to audit by the MDCS board.

Policy Title II: Officers and Duties of Officers

Responsible Area: Parent-Educator Partnership

The following officers shall be elected by the membership of PEP:

Chairperson - The agenda and monthly meetings will be planned by the Chairperson, who shall preside at all meetings of PEP. He/she shall be the official spokesperson for PEP and, as such, will be responsible for reports and for providing a monthly activity and financial statement to the Board of Directors each month at the Board meeting. The chairperson will also be responsible for coordinating all PEP committee activities, performing other duties pertaining to this office, and completing an end-of-year written report to be submitted to the incoming Chairperson during the first week in May. The chairperson will facilitate proactive discussion and resolution of parental concerns and ideas relating to school-wide issues or policies and channel to the appropriate sources to reflect the PEP goals.

Vice Chairperson - The vice chairperson shall assist the chairperson with meeting organization, appointment of committee chairs, and assuming the duties of the chairperson in case of his/her absence or disability. An end-of-year report shall be written by the vice chairperson and submitted to the incoming vice chairperson during the first week in May.

Secretary - The secretary shall prepare and maintain a record of all minutes of PEP meetings, post minutes, post meeting times and reminders to the School Director's office for posting on the MDCS website (*HAPPENINGS*). The secretary shall assist in communication with the parents, faculty, staff and Board. The secretary will write a year-end report and submit it to the incoming secretary during the first week in May.

Treasurer - The treasurer shall be responsible for establishing and maintaining the PEP bank account. The PEP treasurer and the PEP chairperson shall have check signing authority, with two signatures required on each check. The treasurer shall keep an account of all receipts and disbursements in coordination with the Board Treasurer, and shall present a report at any meeting of the PEP and to the Board of Directors whenever requested by the Board chairperson or school director. The Treasurer will write a year-end report during the first week in May and submit it to the incoming treasurer.

Volunteer Coordinator - The volunteer coordinator shall be responsible for assisting the officers, faculty and staff in obtaining volunteer commitments from among MDCS families. The volunteer coordinator shall assist the school office in tracking and recording the volunteer hours contributed by MDCS families. The volunteer coordinator will help identify needs of the school and match talent from the MDCS family to the meeting of those needs.

Fundraising Coordinator - The fundraising coordinator shall be responsible for coordinating the fundraising efforts of the PEP. This person shall work in close collaboration with the Board of Directors and the School Director in establishing fundraising priorities.

A "Core Group" consisting of the officers of the PEP, one staff member as a teacher liaison, at least one parent representative from grades k-2, 3-5, 6-8, and the chairs of the standing committees will be responsible for the PEP meeting its stated objectives and goals.

Other coordinators and/or committees may be formed by PEP at its discretion.

In the event that they do not have children enrolled in MDCS, the Chairperson of the Board of Directors and the School Director shall serve as Ex-officio members of the Parent-Educator Partnership.

Policy Title III: Meetings
Responsible Area: Parent-Educator Partnership

The Parent-Educator Partnership meetings shall be held monthly during the school year at a regularly scheduled time and are open to all PEP members. Executive committee, consisting of the PEP officers, shall meet prior to the monthly meeting in order to create an agenda for the meeting. Any representative or parent, or the School Director, can contact the Chair at least a week in advance of a meeting to add a discussion point to the meeting's agenda. The Treasurer will give a financial report. Each committee chair will update the PEP on the committee's work at least quarterly. Meetings will be no more than two hours in length. At any meeting of the PEP, a vote of the majority of members present shall prevail. Absentee votes will not be counted.

Policy Title IV: Nominations and Elections
Responsible Area: Parent-Educator Partnership

The PEP officers shall be nominated and elected at the April meeting, or as needed during the school year, and shall serve a one year term starting with the next meeting and ending with the election of new officers at the PEP meeting in April of the following year. All officers are eligible for re-election to a second term in the same office. In order to be nominated, a person must be present at the meeting where the election takes place. A majority vote of members present shall constitute election to each office. Absentee votes will not be counted.

If a vacancy occurs in the office of the chairperson, the vice-chairperson shall succeed to the office at the recommendation of the other remaining PEP officers, with the approval by majority vote of PEP membership at the next scheduled PEP meeting. Any vacancy among the officers, with the exception of the chairperson, shall be filled by open election at the next PEP meeting. Should the position be impossible to fill by open election, the duties may be assumed by the remaining officers. Absentee votes will not be counted.

Policy Title V: Amendments to Parent-Educator Partnership Policies
Responsible Area: Parent-Educator Partnership

The policies in the PEP section of the MDCS Policy and Procedure Manual may be amended by the PEP, by recommendation of the PEP officers, at any business meeting of the MDCS PEP by a majority vote of the members present at the meeting. Absentee votes will not be counted.

Any changes recommended by the MDCS PEP must be ratified by the Board of Directors of MDCS.