

Policy

Admission to Mountain Discovery Charter School (MDCS) is open to all students eligible under the guidelines established in GS115C-218.45. Any child who is qualified under the laws of this State for admission to a public school is qualified for admission to this charter school, provided age and grade requirements are met. Students entering kindergarten must turn five years of age on or before August 31st of the school year.

Procedure

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

In the event that the student applications exceed available spaces, Mountain Discovery Charter School is dedicated to providing a fair and unbiased system for assigning student admissions to the school.

Priority of Assignments

In accordance with state law, G.S.115C-218.45(g), children of the school's staff members and members of the Board of Directors may be granted priority for available openings (though limited to 15% of the school's total population). Siblings of currently enrolled students who were enrolled in the previous year will be given priority, on a space available basis. An opportunity priority will be granted to students enrolled within the two previous school years but left the school

- to participate in an academic study abroad program,
- to participate in a competitive admission residential program, or
- because of a parent's vocational opportunity.

Current Suspension or Expulsion

Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, the Board of Directors of Mountain Discovery Charter 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. However, acceptance may be granted on a case by case basis. These decisions will require careful consideration and detailed communication with other schools and, perhaps, the LEA. In such cases, parents must make the Board of Directors aware of the situation so that appropriate action may be taken.

Application Period

The Open Enrollment Period is the time during which applications will be accepted for student admission for the following school year. The beginning and ending dates of the six week Open Enrollment Period will be determined at the first regular meeting of the Board of Directors each October.

Enrollment

If demand exceeds the number of spaces available in any grade level, a public lottery will be held at the end of the Open Enrollment Period. Notice of the time, place and location of the lottery will be sent by regular mail, email, or phone to the parent(s) or guardian of each applicant at least ten (10) days prior to the lottery.

Parents with more than one child in the lottery may choose to enter their name into the lottery of one of the grade levels (heretofore referred to as the lottery grade level). Three outcomes are possible and will be handled as follows:

- If families are drawn at the lottery grade level with space available in that grade, all siblings are placed to the extent that space is available and does not exceed the grade level capacity in their respective grade levels.
- If families are drawn at the lottery grade level with space available in that grade level but not in the other(s), the siblings will be placed at the highest available space on the waitlist for their respective grade level.
- If families are drawn at the lottery grade level when there is no space available in that grade level, all siblings will be placed at the same position on the waitlist for their respective grade level as the sibling in the lottery grade level.
 - Example: A family attempts to enroll children in K, 1st and 3rd grades. They choose to use kindergarten as the lottery grade level. The kindergarten sibling is placed 5th on the kindergarten waitlist. The 1st and 3rd grade siblings are placed 5th on the waitlists for their respective grades. They will be placed last on the waitlist if the list has fewer than five students.

The parent(s) or guardian of the children chosen by lottery for admission to the school will be notified by mail of the results of the lottery. Parent(s) or guardians of the children placed on the waiting list will also be notified by mail of their number on the waiting list. In the event that a child withdraws their application after the lottery or withdraws from the school at any time, admission will be determined from the students on the waiting list.

In accordance with North Carolina law, all applicants, even those who have held a place on the waiting list throughout the previous year, must be placed in the lottery. 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.

Lottery Procedure

1. The lottery will take place at an advertised public meeting on the school campus.
2. Applications will be sorted by grade level and checked for accuracy.
3. A randomized selection process will be chosen by the board of directors to ensure anonymity and equitable access to the selection.
5. A Board officer or designee will record the name of each student drawn until each position in that class is filled. The first names will be placed on the class roster until it is full and the remaining names will be placed on a waiting list in the order they are selected.
6. The same process will be repeated for each subsequent grade level, moving from youngest to oldest.
7. The roster will then be reviewed for accuracy of recording.

Admissions

The parent(s) or guardian of each child chosen for admission must contact the school office and confirm his or her child's eligibility for enrollment within fourteen (14) days of receipt of notice of acceptance. Prior to admittance, accepted students will be required to submit a copy of their birth certificates, immunization records, social security numbers, and transfer records from their previous school. In addition, the parent(s) or guardian will be asked to sign a Parent-School Partnership Agreement stating that they clearly understand the mission of the school and expectations for all parties.

Failure to acknowledge acceptance and confirm eligibility for enrollment will result in loss of admission. For children eligible for admission, the enrollment process is not complete until they have attended school at the beginning of each school year. All parents and guardians will be notified of these requirements in the notice of acceptance.

Students enrolled in previous years will have priority to attend the school in subsequent years, provided they remain in good standing with the school.

Completion of Enrollment Procedures

For both new and returning students, the enrollment process is not complete until the student has attended and been served by Mountain Discovery Charter School at the beginning of each new academic year. In choosing MDCS for their child, families are expected to adhere to the calendar determined annually by the Co-Directors and the Board of Directors and to bring their children to school on the days that school is in session (see Attendance Policy and the Mountain Discovery Charter School Parent-School Partnership Agreement). However, the Board recognizes that individual circumstances may arise that make following the calendar difficult or impossible for some families.

Attendance at the beginning of the school year is extremely important. Missing any part of the educational process may interfere with progress we hope to achieve with each child. Parents will be informed of this policy in writing prior to the start of each school year.

1. All students must attend school on the first day.
2. A student who does not attend school on the first day will risk losing his or her space at the school. If a student does not attend school on the first day, and the Co-Directors have not been notified in advance in writing, s/he shall have the discretion to reassign that space through the wait list process. School officials will make every attempt to reach a family whose child is absent.
3. When an absence is anticipated, whether legal* or illegal, prior notification of the Co-Directors is required. This notification must be in writing.
4. If the absence is not anticipated, families should contact the school immediately.
5. If a student has missed more than the first five full days of school for a legal absence* without notification of the Co-Directors, the Co-Directors 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 his or her space at the school
6. 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 Co-Directors, the Co-Directors 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 his or her space at the school.
7. Even if the student has attended school on the first day, the student cannot be included in the school's head count if s/he subsequently misses 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 (NCDPI). In other words, the state interprets such illegal absences as if the student is no longer enrolled in the school.

***Legal Absences**

1. Illness or injury
2. Quarantine
3. Death in the immediate family
4. Medical or dental appointments
5. Court or administrative proceedings
6. Religious holidays or observances
7. Valid educational opportunity with approval prior to the absence

The NCDPI has made it clear that #7 is not an acceptable legal absence until after the child has attended school and been enrolled.

Waiting List Procedures

Spaces on the waiting list will be assigned during the lottery process for students who apply during the open enrollment period. If it is determined that the grade placement indicated on a student's enrollment form is not appropriate, the child will be moved to the appropriate grade level, provided there is space in that class. If there is no space and provided the parents enrolled the child during the open enrollment period, the child will be placed last among the students on the waiting list who enrolled during open enrollment. If the child was enrolled after open enrollment, then s/he will be placed according to the date and time the enrollment occurred (after all students who enrolled earlier and in front of all students who enrolled later).

Enrollment for new students will close on the last day of the 1st Quarter. If a spot is offered on or before this day, parents/guardians must accept the spot by the close of business and work with the Co-directors to determine the best start date.

Approved by the Board:

May 21, 2014;

Amended March 5, 2015;

Amended October 23, 2025