

Mountain Village Charter School

Proposed by the Mountain Village Charter School Foundation

June 2013

Introduction

The Board members of the Mountain Village Charter School Foundation respectfully submit this application for a state-issued charter school in the Plymouth, New Hampshire region. The proposed *Mountain Village Charter School* will be a kindergarten through eighth grade, nature-based, Montessori elementary school opening in September 2014. We plan to open with two 1-3 grade classrooms and add a 4-6 class in September 2015. Our goal as a public school of choice is to provide our school district with another high-quality program and an alternative option focusing on Montessori and nature-based practices. In terms of enrollment, our goal is to serve approximately 150 students by 2019.

Since we will be the first nature-based, Montessori charter school in New Hampshire we are including some information about these approaches and their benefits below.

Montessori Philosophy

Montessori education is a world-renowned approach developed in the early 1900s by Italian physician and educator Dr. Maria Montessori.

Characteristics of Montessori Education

- Child-centered, individualized and structured approach;
- Freedom of choice, responsibility and respect for the self and for others;
- Specialized educational materials developed by Montessori and her collaborators;
- Hands-on materials that enable students to self-correct as they learn and;
- Multi-age classrooms based on scientifically proven developmental stages.

Eight Principles of Montessori Education

1. Movement and cognition are closely entwined, and movement can enhance thinking and learning;
2. Learning and well-being are improved when people have a sense of control over their lives;
3. People learn better when they are interested in what they are learning;
4. Tying extrinsic rewards to an activity negatively impacts motivation to engage in that activity when the reward is withdrawn;
5. Collaborative arrangements can be very conducive to learning;
6. Learning situated in meaningful contexts is often deeper and richer than learning in abstract contexts;
7. Particular forms of adult interaction are associated with more optimal child outcomes;
8. Order in the environment is beneficial to children.

Today, Dr. Montessori's method is used worldwide in both public and private settings, educating children from pre-K through high school. There are over 6,000 Montessori schools in the United States, with just over 400 public Montessori schools.

Nature-Based Education

Maria Montessori strongly advocated for nature experiences in the education of the child. In 1948 she lamented, "How often is the soul of man - especially in childhood - deprived because he is not allowed to come in contact with nature." Direct experience of nature by the child was one of her core educational practices. In current years, empirical research has begun to offer a strong rationale for including nature-based components in the school's mission. Including nature experiences as part of the school's pedagogical approach will have substantial benefits for the students' growth in cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. The nature component will also support student achievement and learning by promoting brain states that are conducive to learning.

There are seven universal, cross-cultural patterns in children's play-work (Sobel, 2008). For children between the ages of 6 and 12, being allowed to play-work in these ways promotes the development of creativity, independence, psycho-emotional health and full motor development. Emerging from these universal and cross-cultural themes are seven central design principles for educators, all of which are facilitated by access to unstructured outdoor environments:

1. **Adventure:** Uncertain outcomes and perceived risk promote natural engagement and critical thinking skills.
2. **Fantasy and Imagination:** Natural environments provide the richest possibilities for interpretation and construction of imaginative realities. This fantasy play allows children a safe place to explore new ideas, and they promote creativity.
3. **Animal Allies:** A universal pattern in childhood is fascination with animals, especially wild animals. This curiosity lays the foundation of the important social-emotional qualities of human empathy, compassion and perspective-taking.
4. **Maps and Paths:** Piecing together the geography of even small places activates a child's spatial reasoning, and also increases a sense of identity that is enmeshed with place.
5. **Special Places:** The opportunity to create special places such as forts or secret alcoves in the forest encourages reflective thinking skills, promotes fantasy play and independence.
6. **Small Worlds:** Developing microcosms of real worlds promotes the cognitive ability to make connections between the concrete and the abstract, and also provides a sense of security in a world that is simplified and knowable.
7. **Hunting and Gathering (Finding and Collecting):** Based on a psycho-evolutionary approach to human development, Sobel suggests that the universal fascination that

children have with finding and collecting items is analogous with prehistoric human hunting and gathering

The Benefits of Integrating Nature-Based and Montessori Education

The integration of nature-based education with a Montessori philosophy is a uniquely complimentary approach which will produce measurable outcomes in students' development of spatial reasoning skills, social-emotional competencies, analytical skills, motor development, judgment and risk assessment, autonomy, leadership, collaboration and pro-environmental behaviors. As noted above Maria Montessori recognized the pivotal importance of nature experience in the formation of the child. Contemporary research provides support for this engagement with nature, as noted in some detail below:

- Physical engagement with natural environments is an important element of brain-compatible learning approaches. Natural environments promote ideal neurological states (sometimes called relaxed alertness) for learning (Caine, Caine, McClintic, & Klimek, 2005), and they actually promote the growth of individual neurons and interconnected neural networks (Ratey, 2008).
- Time spent by children in natural environments has numerous psychological benefits. It is a buffer of life stresses, leading to increased resilience (Wells & Evans, 2003). It also leads to decreased stress and aggression and increased attention, and has been shown to reduce the symptoms of ADD/ADHD. These same students score higher on tests of concentration and self-discipline (Kuo & Faber Taylor, 2002; Kuo & Faber Taylor, 2004; Kuo & Sullivan, 2001).
- Play-work in a natural environment has many social-emotional benefits. For example, students in these settings engage in little or no bullying (Malone & Tranter, 2003). Also, Montessori children often display a well-developed sense of “justice and fairness” and interact in an “emotionally positive” way and are less likely to engage in “rough play” during break times (Education Guardian, 2006).
- Comparisons between built and un-built playscapes demonstrate that children allowed to play in areas such as forests have greater motor development at a younger age than those who play in traditional schoolyards (Fjørtoft, 2001; Fjørtoft & Sageie, 2000). These students are also sick less often (Mitten, 2009).
- Children who have opportunities to connect emotionally with a specific place over extended periods of critical childhood years of approximately 6 to 12 years of age have a greater likelihood of developing caring attitudes toward environmental issues, and greater likelihood of pro-environmental behaviors as young adults and adults. Critical attitudes toward the environment are formed in these years (Chawla, 2003; Chawla & Cushing, 2007; Kahn & Kellert, 2002; Sobel, 2008).
- These same experiences have been shown to promote strong identity development, with implications through adolescence into adulthood (Thomashow, 2002). The emerging ideas of

the field of eco-psychology also suggest that these kinds of relationships with places are a necessary part of healthy human growth and development (Roszak, Gomes, & Kanner, 1995).

- Early experiences with the natural world have been positively linked with the development of imagination and the sense of wonder (Cobb, 1977). Wonder is an important motivator for lifelong learning. Also, when children play in natural environments, their play is more diverse with imaginative and creative play that fosters language and collaborative skills. Engagement with nature in out-of classroom experiences is directly supportive of students' development in select subject areas. For example, in one study, out of classroom nature experiences were the most important factor correlating with interest and engagement in biological sciences (Uitto, Juuti, Lavonen, & Meisalo, 2006).

Why Charter?

The Pemi-Baker school district currently does not have an elementary charter school within 48 miles and no private elementary school option within 20 miles. The closest private elementary school has a waitlist for this year's entering Kindergarten class. The nearest private nature-based and elementary options are located 45 miles away (in opposing directions). The average income in the Pemi-Baker School district is \$50,000. Even if a private school was available it is simply unaffordable to most families in our district.

Over the last five years, three private Montessori and/or nature-based, pre-elementary schools have opened in our district and are thriving with a total of 51 pre-school through kindergarten students. There are two additional private Montessori pre-elementary schools with a total of 43 students within 30 miles of Plymouth. We believe this speaks to the desire for quality Montessori education in our district.

A local Montessori and nature-based Charter School will provide an inclusive educational opportunity to families seeking this specific and alternative option.

Why the Plymouth, New Hampshire region?

The Pemi-Baker School district (SAU 48) is comprised of eight towns and 1,600 elementary students. There are 800 children under the age of five in our district alone; and 400 additional children under the age of five in the five neighboring towns within 30 miles of Plymouth.

The town of Plymouth is a hub in our region, providing many services to a large geographical area. This is in part because of Plymouth's easy access to I-93. Plymouth State University (PSU) has a wealth of resources for our town and potentially for our charter. One of these resources we hope to mobilize is the approximate 1,500 education students.

Our region currently does not offer alternatives to traditional elementary public education. Our proposed charter school would benefit the district and provide a public school of choice to many of the smaller surrounding towns.

Financial Sustainability

Public schools, including the proposed *Mountain Village Charter School*, cannot and will not ask families to pay for their children's education during our regular school day. However, as evidenced by New Hampshire charter schools currently in operation, funding from the State is often insufficient to maintain the charter schools' programming.

We understand the significance of an effective development plan that will outline our strategy for long-term financial sustainability. Upon charter approval, the *Mountain Village Charter School*, will create a 501(c)3 Foundation to develop and implement a plan that will address our goal for long-term financial sustainability and outline the tactics to reach this goal including:

- Local business and community leader support;
- Fundraising events to raise funds, visibility and local community support;
- Intensive parent involvement in fundraising committee and efforts;
- Grant research and outreach to local and national foundations to assist with startup and recurrent capital and operating costs.
- Income generating programs, such as before and after care and a tuition-based summer program.

These approaches have been met with measured success by existing charters, and our work in this area has already begun and will intensify upon receipt of the charter.

(a) Educational Mission & Vision Statement

Educational Mission

The proposed *Mountain Village Charter School* is an educational community engaging the child through a nature-based, Montessori approach. The curriculum inspires abstract thinking by exploring creative thought and critical reasoning. The approach places equal emphasis on rigorous academics, artistic expression, social development and community service.

Educational Vision

We believe that education is most effective when full attention is placed on meeting the needs of the whole child. We believe that a child's full potential - physical, intellectual, social and emotional -can be realized through the exploration of the environment. We believe that patterns of concentration and attention to detail, when established early, produce a confident, competent learner in later years. By embracing the Montessori philosophy and nature-based practices in our approach to education, we believe that engaging our students in child-centered and project-oriented learning will spark innate curiosity, nurture inner discipline and foster the child's

motivation to learn. We believe in creating a welcoming and nurturing environment for students from a diversity of backgrounds, skills, challenges, and needs. We believe in fostering a culture of respect, individuality and celebrating diversity of all kinds.

We believe in the vital importance of encouraging in children a sense of respect and stewardship for the natural world and for all the inhabitants of the earth. To this end we believe a nature-based curriculum offers unlimited opportunities to create a dynamic learning environment that integrates science and math, history and social studies, languages and art. We believe that in such an environmentally literate learning community students will develop the skills, knowledge, and inclinations to make well-informed choices and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a diverse world community.

We believe in offering individual work plans that encourage children to assume their full share of the responsibility for their own learning. We believe in promoting experiences where students create and develop real-world projects that enable them to apply new skills across content areas and to develop leadership skills. We believe in allowing children to take as much time as they need to master a skill and move on to the next concept when they are ready. We believe in providing materials and lessons that appeal to a variety of learning styles. Finally, we believe in fostering creativity and curiosity in children, leading to the development of critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Educational Goals

- Provide an academic experience above and beyond the New Hampshire Core Curriculum, delivered through the Montessori Scope and Sequence and nature-based learning experience;
- Address the standards set forth by the NH Environmental Literacy Plan;
- Create mixed-age classrooms where peer-to-peer teaching and modeling is fully supported;
- Develop 21st century learners through the appropriate use of technology and creative problem solving, leading to responsible and knowledgeable global citizens;
- Use community service to create a strong sense of community, place, and belonging;
- Encourage the development of social-emotional intelligence: self-awareness, emotion management, empathy, communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution;
- Provide materials and lessons that appeal to a variety of learning styles;
- Promote executive functioning skills including organizational, self-control, adaptability, initiative, memory, planning, self-monitoring;
- Utilize multiple strategies of assessment, evaluation and reporting to help students learn, to inform teachers' understanding of the child, and to include families in the learning process;
- Build a strong school community led by qualified and nurturing educators, and supported by engaged parents/guardians and community members;
- Create a close, long term relationship between students and teachers.

(b) Governance and Organizational Structure and Plan & Board Member Qualifications

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees will govern *The Mountain Village Charter School* with statutory responsibilities under RSA 194-B:5 for “general supervisory control and authority over operations of the charter school.”

The initial board will be made up of the 8 members of the Mountain Village Charter School Foundation, known as the Founding Board (*Brief biographical information of the Founding Board members appears in Appendix A*). The founding members will prepare the charter school application for approval, promote the mission of the school and select the first Board of Trustees. Thereafter, the Board of Trustees will be comprised of not less than nine nor more than nineteen members.

The Board of Trustees will consist of the Head of School, who may be a non-voting member, parents, community members, and business owners.

The first Board of Trustees will consist of a chair, vice chair, secretary, and treasurer and will establish governing policies. The Board of Trustees will exercise its authority to set policy and make decisions that serve the mission of the school and will have oversight and authority to render final decisions on matters pertaining to:

- Hiring of the Head of School
- Approval and oversight of annual budget and fund-raising programs
- Setting policy
- Appointment of one or more advisory members or committees
- Delineating educational priorities
- Overseeing the school’s growth plan
- Setting professional salaries and compensation program
- Reviewing and approving significant contracts, e.g., for facilities and benefit programs
- Matters for which the board serves as a hearing body for action or appeals
- Any other matters that are not administrative in nature and/or that are prescribed in statute or rule

(c) Methods by Which Trustees and Their Terms Are Determined.

The Founding Board comprised of the 8 members of the Mountain Village Charter School Foundation submitting this charter school application and overseeing the School’s development, will appoint the School’s initial Trustees. The overarching goal in selecting Trustees is finding members who support the Founders’ vision and have a commitment to the school’s mission and goals. Founders will seek Trustees who bring professional expertise, wisdom, educational,

financial and governance experience to the Board of the *Mountain Village Charter School*. Appointment of Trustees will require recommendation, discussion and approval by a majority vote.

Trustees of the *Mountain Village Charter School* will have terms of three years. The initial Board will have staggered term completion to facilitate transition. Terms can be renewed by in accordance with developed Board by-laws, but will be limited to three consecutive, three year terms.

The Board of Trustees of *Mountain Village Charter School*, once operational, will select and appoint future Trustees, define future Board terms, and vote on policies for Board governance and filling vacancies. For purposes of conducting business, the Board will be subject to New Hampshire Right to Know Law, RSA 91-A. For purposes of lawful meetings, a quorum is defined as a majority of Trustees who must be physically present or participating through video or voice communication systems. Records and minutes of meetings will be kept in accordance with statutory guidelines.

Board members are expected to regularly attend board meetings. The Board will consider regular participation to be crucial in order to ensure success of the Board's effort and the School overall.

Openings on the Board will be filled by recommendation, nomination, and vote of a majority of the Board. Board members elected to fill out the term of a Board member will have a term that completes the remainder of the prior trustee's term.

(d) General description and proposed or potential location of facilities to be used, if such information is available.

The Founding Board has identified Plymouth, NH, as the town best suited for our school facility. However, depending on our real estate needs and in consideration of the school finances, other surrounding towns adjacent to Plymouth may also be considered. Our search for an appropriate site has already begun and will intensify upon charter approval.

Our initial facilities will require 2,000 square feet to account for classroom and administrative offices. At full enrollment we will require closer to 5,000 square feet of space. Because of our nature-based approach we will require extensive outdoor space adjacent to our indoor space.

Consideration for parking and traffic flow to accommodate drop off and pick up areas for cars as well as school buses will also be taken into account. We will seek a site that is easily accessible by all members of the community, by district bus routes and in close proximity to I-93.

(e) Maximum Number, Grade or Age Levels

Enrollment and growth plan

Mountain Village Charter School will open in September 2014 with two, mixed-age class of 24-28, 1st – 3rd graders. In the first year, we will offer spaces across all three grade levels, but anticipate that the number of grade 3 enrollees will be lower, relative to enrollees for grades 1 and 2. Fall 2015, we will add one 4th – 6th grade classroom with a maximum of 28 students. We will continue to add additional 1-3, 4-6 and eventually 7-8, Kindergarten classrooms as needed.

Though we will be open to applications across all grades in the early years of operation, once the School fills to capacity, admission will be determined by available space, and therefore, for most students, the entry point will be 1st grade. However, the Head of School will have some discretion in choosing to extend the opportunity for older students to apply, based on available space. In these circumstances, the Head of School would evaluate each potential student's educational experience to determine the appropriate fit with the Montessori pedagogy.

Should the number of potential students exceed availability, a blind lottery will be conducted to determine which of the older student(s) would be invited to enroll. (*Also see Admission Procedures, page 25*)

In our subsequent years, we will grow approximately 150 K-8 students.

A Montessori and Nature-based Learning Approach: Building the School Community

A Nature-based, Montessori pedagogy is significantly different from that of a traditional classroom, in part because it builds on students' Montessori, Nature-specific experience year after year. Therefore, the method of ramping up a Montessori school is slightly more complicated than a ramp-up program for a more traditional approach. Montessori experts agree that it can be challenging for most children beyond 2nd or 3rd grade to enter into the tradition if they have not had previous exposure.

Our School will begin by filling the lower elementary classrooms in the first few years of operation, in order to build a cohort of Montessori-experienced students who will graduate into our upper elementary program. We expect to have strong attendance from area Montessori preschool and kindergarten students who will have been trained in the Montessori method from the very start of their education. Like any charter, we can expect that our student body will be a mix of many kinds of learners, from many different backgrounds.

We have planned our growth with the following in mind:

- The need to grow at a reasonable and responsible rate to best serve and support our students, their families and faculty.
- The need to integrate students with and without Montessori experience during the first few years of the School's existence.
- The need to establish multi-aged classrooms with the maximum of 28 students with one Lead Teacher and one Assistant Teacher per classroom.

Evidence from other independent charter schools in New Hampshire shows limited attrition. We recognize that families move, however, as a state-issued charter, *Mountain Village Charter School* will be able to continue to meet our students' educational needs wherever they reside in the greater Plymouth area.

Our Students: Drawn Together from Many Corners

The *Mountain Village Charter School* aims to be a welcoming community with a diverse student body. To be successful, we recognize the need to begin as a modest-sized school as we will be mixing learning styles, experience, economic status, race and ethnicities — differences that often divide communities. We will have to grow responsibly, making certain to provide sufficient resources to our students, their families and the School's faculty and staff.

With no public Montessori or Nature-based schools in our area, only a small percentage of New Hampshire families have the resources necessary to send their children to private Montessori or Nature-based programs. We see the *Mountain Village Charter School* as an option for *all* families interested in a Nature-based, Montessori education.

Our classrooms will look and function very differently than a traditional public school classroom. To aid in the transition that some of our students with no previous Montessori experience may encounter during the School's first few years, our lower elementary students will have full access to the key Montessori-specific materials used by pre-k and kindergarten students. Additionally, students' personal learning plans will ensure that they are helped into the Montessori approach in whatever ways are determined to be necessary.

There are many public Montessori schools that integrate tutoring (both support and enrichment) into their overall approach that will serve as a resource for us as we develop this program. Beyond the students' initial entry to the *Mountain Village Charter School*, the tutoring program will be available at each step of the way, as a means of providing support, resources and exciting challenges to students at all levels of accomplishment.

Shape and Size of Our Classrooms

As stated earlier, the Montessori classroom is a mixed-age classroom. Over time, the goal is that each classroom will become a community of learners, and that students remain together (as much as possible) with the same teachers and classmates as they progress through each 3-year block (grades 1-3 and grades 4-6). Once we are past our first few years, this goal will be achievable at the *Mountain Village Charter School*.

To build successful Montessori teaching environments, we will aim to have twenty- eight students in each lower and upper elementary classroom. Each classroom will have one Lead Teacher and one Assistant. This class size plan will provide teachers with opportunities to provide individualized attention to their students and to observe each child, each day. It will also enable small-group work, as well as full-group work and projects. Most public Montessori schools around the country strive for this approximate number, though during the School's

growth years there may be classes that are slightly larger, or slightly smaller. We will have additional teacher presence as needed during those growth years.

By year five we expect to have one Kindergarten classroom two lower elementary classrooms and two upper elementary classrooms and one middle school classroom.

(f) Curriculum

The Nature-based, Montessori Classroom: A Prepared Environment

Dr. Montessori believed that children learn best in what she termed a “prepared environment,” one that makes learning materials and experiences available to children in an organized fashion. Today this is described widely as child-centered education and active learning. The beautiful classrooms are filled with manipulatives — hands-on learning materials developed by Dr. Montessori, as well as other supplementary resources, all of which encourage even the youngest students to use all five senses to address concepts they will come to master. Teachers present these materials to their students, individually and in small or large group settings. Through order, repetition, exploration, manipulation and communication, younger students begin to get an idea of their place in the world. Many of the materials used by students as they progress are self-correcting and begin with basic concepts, and then move toward more complicated principles. At each stage, Montessori students naturally move away from the materials, realizing that their mental processes are faster than the manipulatives.

In the Montessori classroom the teacher does not stand at the front of the room expecting that everyone *will* be or *can* be learning the same thing at the same time. Students progress at their own pace with a clear, personal learning plan, and individualized attention is built into the methodology. The child’s independence is respected and celebrated. Students are allowed and encouraged to move freely in their environment, spending as much time as needed with particular materials or working on projects. Dr. Montessori believed strongly that movement is far more productive for students than a sedentary approach where children are expected to remain in their seats. A visitor to a Montessori classroom might observe many subjects — math, language, science, history, geography, art, music, etc. — simultaneously being studied by individual students or small groups of learners, independently and with their teachers.

Of course there are ground rules for the learning community and clear expectations on the part of the children and educators. The Montessori method fosters freedom of choice — what students want to learn — but also insists on the development of well- balanced learners. Children and their teachers develop a work contract and chart progress to ensure growth and success in all areas.

Traditionally, the Montessori workday is divided into multiple work blocks, which at the elementary level are 3-hours long, slightly shorter for the kindergarteners. These extended work periods allow students to explore materials and concepts deeply and independently. It is here where children develop concentration, focus and inner-discipline.

The multi-age classrooms further assist in solidifying the learning process — the older children help teach the younger children, and what better way is there to build maturity, nurturing, leadership skills and mastery of subject than by classmates educating one another. Students model work habits, social and language skills and a shared culture of positivism and support develops for all. Ideally, to be competitive later in life, children need to develop a strong sense of self and an ability to work with others.

The Teacher's Role: Observer and Guide

The job of the *Mountain Village Charter School* teacher is to follow each child's progress, to create an environment where curriculum materials are made available and presented to the students when they are ready to progress, and to encourage children to complete each phase of their work. *Mountain Village Charter School* teachers are charged with (1) meeting the students' physical, mental and emotional needs, (2) designing individual and group learning opportunities, and (3) creating extensive documentation of the progress and activity of all those in the classroom. Ultimately, our teachers support their students in ways that lead the children toward success, independence and the ability to work cooperatively with others. These educators know when to offer assistance, and when to step back and let self-discovery and independence happen. They trust and respect the child, so that the children will trust and respect themselves and others around them.

Social responsibility is part of every aspect of a nature-based, Montessori method. Grace, courtesy, peace and a cosmic connection to all things is part of school culture. Because most of the Montessori materials are self-correcting, they afford children the ability to learn on their own initiatives, thus enabling teachers one on one contact with children requiring more assistance.

An effective assessment system uses multiple strategies to demonstrate growth and performance over time. Therefore, the *Mountain Village Charter School* will create an ongoing assessment model that blends the Nature-based learning tools, Montessori methods of assessment such as the teacher's observation, record keeping, student portfolios and a growing selection of Montessori-oriented assessment materials with standardized testing, to meet state and national requirements.

Creating 21 Century Thinkers

The primary goal of the *Mountain Village Charter School* is to help each child reach his/her full potential so that they become independent, lifelong learners who take responsibility for themselves, for their classmates and for their surrounding environment. During their educational journey, students will lay the foundation to become 21st century thinkers with higher-order critical thinking, analytical and collaborative learning skills. On this path of self-improvement and self-discovery, they learn that they are not alone and that encouraging, supporting and working together with other learners not only leads to success for themselves, but for their classmates and their society as well. As they grow to understand their connection to, and responsibility for, their world, their appreciation for the gifts others have to offer is increased.

Our students experience learning as something to be loved and cherished, something that is beautiful, and something they are doing for themselves.

Scope and Sequence

At *Mountain Village Charter School*, we believe that the foundation of a good education is to learn how to learn. Our course of study encompasses the full substance of the traditional curriculum and goes beyond to teach students how to think clearly, do their own research, express themselves well in writing and speech, and to put their knowledge to practical application.

We have organized our course of study as an inclined spiral plane of integrated studies, rather than a traditional model in which the curriculum is compartmentalized into separate subjects with given topics considered only once at a given grade level. At *Mountain Village Charter School*, lessons are introduced simply and concretely in the early years and are reintroduced several times during the following years at increasing degrees of abstraction and complexity.

Our course of study is an integrated thematic approach that ties the separate disciplines of the curriculum together into studies of the physical universe, the world of nature, and the human experience. As children reach the elementary years, they will be challenged to pursue a considerable amount of library and field research both in and outside of school.

The following is a brief overview of *Mountain Village Charter School's* core curriculum in the areas of language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, sensory training, and practical life for our students age 5 through the upper elementary and junior high level(s). Please keep in mind that this only represents an overview of the course of study, and is not meant to be complete. Since our students progress at their own pace, it is not possible to divide up the curriculum by grade levels. Also, this scope and sequence does not include descriptions of our curriculum in the arts, music, physical education, and foreign language.

Reading and Language Arts/Pre-Reading

Due to our multi-age classroom design, our youngest students are constantly exposed to the older children in the class who are already reading. This model tends to create and reinforce in our young children a spontaneous interest in learning how to read. We begin to teach reading as soon as that interest is first expressed.

- Using a total immersion approach, we help the youngest children to develop a highly sophisticated vocabulary and command of the language.
- The children are taught through many early approaches to listen for and recognize the individual phonetic sounds in words.
- We introduce the children to literature by reading aloud and discussing a wide range of classic stories and poetry.

- We help our youngest students to recognize the shape and phonetic sounds of the alphabet through the 'sandpaper letters:' a tactile alphabet.

Reading

- The development of the concept that written words are actual thoughts set down on paper.
- Sounding out simple three or four-letter phonetic words. (Typically before age 5)
- Early exercises to practice reading and to gain the concept of a noun: labeling objects with written name tags, mastering increasingly complex words naming things that interest them, such as dinosaurs, the parts of a flower, geometric shapes, the materials in the classroom, etc.
- Learning to recognize verbs: normally exercises in which the child reads a card with a verbal "command" printed out (such as run, sit, walk, etc.) and demonstrates his understanding by acting it out. As the child's reading vocabulary increases, verbal commands involve full sentences and multiple steps: "Place the mat on the table and bring back a red pencil."
- Reading specially selected or prepared small books on topics that really interest the child, such as in science, geography, nature or history.
- Interpretive reading for comprehension at ever increasing levels of difficulty, beginning in the early elementary grades and continuing through the junior high school level.
- Use of the library and reference books on a daily basis for both research and pleasure.
- An introduction to the world's classical children's literature at increasing depth and sophistication.

Handwriting

Control of the hand in preparation for writing is developed through many exercises, including specially designed tasks in the use of the pencil. Such exercises begin with very young children and extend over several years so that mastery is gradually, but thoroughly, attained.

The young children practice making letters from the time of their first initial "explosion into writing" (at age 3 or 4).

- Moveable Alphabets' made up of easily manipulated plastic letters are used for the early stages of phonetic word creation, the analysis of words, and spelling. They facilitate early reading and writing tasks during the period when young children are still not comfortable with their own writing skills. Even before the children are comfortable in their handwriting skills, they spell words, compose sentences and stories, and work on punctuation and capitalization with the moveable alphabets (Age 4-6).
- At first, by tracing letters into sand.

- Later, by writing on special tilted, upright blackboards: unlined, wide-lined, and narrow-lined.
- Later, by writing on special writing tablets, becoming comfortable with script.
- Cursive writing (Typically around age 5)
- Word Processing (Normally beginning around age 6)
- Calligraphy (Whenever the child is interested, often around age 10.)

Composition

At an early age, before handwriting has been mastered, the children compose sentences, stories, and poetry through oral dictation to adults and with the use of the moveable alphabet. Once handwriting is fairly accomplished, the children begin to develop their composition skills. They continue to develop over the years at increasing levels of sophistication.

- Preparing written answers to simple questions.
- Composing stories to follow a picture series.
- Beginning to write stories or poems on given simple themes.
- Preparing written descriptions of science experiments.
- Preparing written reports.
- Learning how to write letters.
- By age 9, research skills and the preparation of reports become major components of the educational program at MVCS. Students research areas of interest or topics that have been assigned in depth, and prepare both formal and informal, written and oral reports.
- Creative and expository composition skills continue to develop as the children advance from level to level. Students are typically asked to write on a daily basis, composing short stories, poems, plays, reports, and news articles.

Spelling

Children begin to spell using the moveable alphabet to sound out and spell words as they are first learning to read. They 'take dictation' - spelling words called for by the teacher - as a daily exercise. The sequence of spelling, as with all language skills, begins much earlier than is traditional in this country, during a time when children are spontaneously interested in language. It continues throughout their education.

- Learning to sound out and spell simple phonetic words.
- Learning to recognize and spell words involving phonograms, such as *ei*, *ai*, or *ough*.

- Developing a first "personal" dictionary of words that they can now spell.
- Learning to recognize and spell the "puzzle words" of English: words that are non-phonetic and are not spelled as they sound.
- Studying words: involving compound words, contractions, singular-plural, masculine-feminine words, prefixes, suffixes, synonyms, antonyms, homonyms.

Grammar

The study of grammar begins almost immediately after the child begins to read, during the sensitive period when he is spontaneously interested in language. It continues over several years until mastered. The idea is to introduce grammar to the young child as she is first learning how to put thoughts down on paper, when the process is natural and interesting, rather than waiting until the student is much older and finds the work tedious.

- We introduce our children to the function of the parts of speech one at a time through many games and exercises that isolate the one element under study. Montessori has assigned a geometric symbol to represent each element of grammar. (For example, verbs are represented by a large red circle.) The children analyze sentences by placing the symbols for the appropriate part of speech over each word.
- Once students have mastered the concrete symbols for the parts of speech, they perform more advanced exercises for several years with grammar boxes set up to allow them to analyze sentences by their parts of speech.
- Sentence analysis: simple and compound sentences, clauses, verb voices, and logical analysis of all sorts of sentences are studied using many different concrete materials and exercises. This normally begins about age 5 and continues over several years.
- Students continue their study of language from the mid-elementary years onward, reviewing as well as engaging new concepts and skills: tenses, moods, irregular verbs, person and number, the study of style, the study of grammatical arrangements in other languages.

Mathematics

In a Montessori environment students are typically introduced to numbers at age 3: learning the numbers and number symbols one to ten: the red and blue rods, sandpaper numerals, association of number rods and numerals, spindle boxes, cards and counters, counting, sight recognition, concept of odd and even.

- Introduction to the decimal system typically begins at age 3 or 4. Units, tens, hundreds, thousands are represented by specially prepared concrete learning materials that show the decimal hierarchy in three dimensional form: units = single beads, tens = a bar of 10 units, hundreds = 10 ten bars fastened together into a square, thousands = a cube ten units long ten units wide and ten units high. The children learn to first recognize the quantities, then to form

numbers with the bead or cube materials through 9,999 and to read them back, to read and write numerals up to 9,999, and to exchange equivalent quantities of units for tens, tens for hundreds, etc.

- Linear Counting: learning the number facts to ten (what numbers make ten, basic addition up to ten); learning the teens ($11 = \text{one ten} + \text{one unit}$), counting by tens ($34 = \text{three tens} + \text{four units}$) to one hundred.

- Development of the concept of the four basic mathematical operations: addition, subtraction, division, and multiplication through work with the Montessori Golden Bead Material. The child builds numbers with the bead material and performs mathematical operations concretely. (This process normally begins by age 4 and extends over the next two or three years.) Work with this material over a long period is critical to the full understanding of abstract mathematics for all but a few exceptional children. This process tends to develop in the child a much deeper understanding of mathematics.

- Development of the concept of "dynamic" addition and subtraction through the manipulation of the concrete math materials. (Addition and subtraction where exchanging and regrouping of numbers is necessary.)

- Memorization of the basic math facts: adding and subtracting numbers under 10 without the aid of the concrete materials. (Typically begins at age 5 and is normally completed by age 7.)

- Development of further abstract understanding of addition, subtraction, division, and multiplication with large numbers through the Stamp Game (a manipulative system that represents the decimal system as color-keyed "stamps") and the Small and Large Bead Frames (color-coded abacuses).

- Skip counting with the chains of the squares of the numbers from zero to ten: i.e., counting to 25 by 5's, to 36 by 6's, etc. (Age 5-6) Developing first understanding of the concept of the "square" of a number.

- Skip counting with the chains of the cubes of the numbers zero to ten: i.e., counting to 1,000 by ones or tens. Developing the first understanding of the concept of a "cube" of a number.

- Beginning the "passage to abstraction," the child begins to solve problems with paper and pencil while working with the concrete materials. Eventually, the materials are no longer needed.

- Development of the concept of long multiplication and division through concrete work with the bead and cube materials. (The child is typically 6 or younger, and cannot yet do such problems on paper without the concrete materials. The objective is to develop the concept first.)

- Development of more abstract understanding of "short" division through more advanced manipulative materials (Division Board); movement to paper and pencil problems, and memorization of basic division facts. (Normally by age 7-8)

- Development of still more abstract understanding of "long" multiplication through highly advanced and manipulative materials (the Multiplication Checkerboard). (Usually age 7-8)
- Development of still more abstract understanding of "long division" through highly advanced manipulative materials (Test Tube Division apparatus). (Typically by age 7-8)
- Solving problems involving parentheses, such as $(3 \times 4) - (2 + 9) = ?$
- Missing sign problems: In a given situation, should you add, divide, multiply or subtract?
- Introduction to problems involving tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, and millions. (Normally by age 7.)
- Study of fractions: Normally begins when children using the short division materials who find that they have a "remainder" of one and ask whether or not the single unit can be divided further. The study of fractions begins with very concrete materials (the fraction circles), and involves learning names, symbols, equivalencies common denominators, and simple addition, subtraction, division, and multiplication of fractions up to "tenths". (Normally by age 7-8)
- Study of decimal fractions: all four mathematical operations. (Normally begins by age 8-9, and continues for about two years until the child totally grasps the ideas and processes.)
- Practical application problems, which are used to some extent from the beginning, become far more important around age 7-8 and afterward. Solving word problems, and determining arithmetic procedures in real situations becomes a major focus.
- Money: units, history, equivalent sums, foreign currencies (units and exchange). (Begins as part of social studies and applied math by age 6.)
- Interest: concrete to abstract; real life problems involving credit cards and loans; principal, rate, time.
- Computing the squares and cubes of numbers: cubes and squares of binomials and trinomials. (Normally by age 10)
- Calculating square and cube roots: from concrete to abstract. (Normally by age 10 or 11)
- The history of mathematics and its application in science, engineering, technology & economics.
- Reinforcing application of all mathematical skills to practical problems around the school and in everyday life.
- Basic data gathering, graph reading and preparation, and statistical analysis.

Geometry

Sensorial exploration of plane and solid figures at the Primary level (Ages 3 to 6): the children learn to recognize the names and basic shapes of plane and solid geometry through manipulation of special wooden geometric insets. They then learn to order them by size or degree.

- Stage I: Basic geometric shapes. (Age 3-4)
- Stage II: More advanced plane geometric shapes-triangles, polygons, various rectangles and irregular forms. (Age 3-5)
- Stage III: Introduction to solid geometric forms and their relationship to plane geometric shapes. (Age 2-5)
- Study of the basic properties and definitions of the geometric shapes. This is essentially as much a reading exercise as mathematics since the definitions are part of the early language materials.
- More advanced study of the nomenclature, characteristics, measurement and drawing of the geometric shapes and concepts such as points, line, angle, surface, solid, properties of triangles, circles, etc. (Continues through age 12 in repeated cycles.)
- Congruence, similarity, equality, and equivalence.
- The history of applications of geometry.
- The theorem of Pythagorus.
- The calculation of area and volume.

Geography/Physical Geography

- The Primary Globes (Age 3-5): specially prepared globes for the very young child that isolate single concepts of globe study-how land and water are shown, and the corresponding shapes of the continents that they learned from the puzzle maps.
- The Puzzle Maps (Age 3-7): These are specially made maps in the forms of intricate, color-coded, wooden jigsaw puzzles representing the continents, the countries of each continent, and the states of the U.S. They are presented to the children at an early age, and are at first enjoyed simply as challenging puzzles. Soon, however, the children begin to learn the names of given countries, and by age 6 are normally very familiar with the continents of the globe, the nations of North America, South America, and Europe, along with most of the states of the U.S. As soon as the children can read they begin to lay the puzzle pieces out and place the appropriate name labels to each as a reading and geography exercise.
- Land & Water Formations: materials designed to help the very young child understand basic land and water formations such as island, isthmus, peninsula, strait, lake, cape, bay, archipelago, etc. At first, they are represented by three-dimensional models of each, complete with water.

Then the children learn to recognize the shapes on maps, and learn about famous examples of each.

- Transference to maps: Introduction to written names and various forms of maps, along with early study of the flora, fauna, landscapes, and people of the continents.
- Maps and compass: Introduction to longitude and latitude, coordinate position on the globe, the Earth's poles, the magnetic poles, history and use of the compass, topographic maps, global positioning satellite devices, electronic charts.
- An introduction to humankind's search to understand how the Earth was formed, from creation stories to the evidence of contemporary scientific research: origins, geologic forces, formations of the oceans and atmosphere, continental drift and tectonic plates, volcanoes, earth quakes, the ice ages and the formation of mountain ranges. (Age 6)
- The study of coasts and land reliefs: hills, mountain ranges, volcanoes, valleys, plains, etc.; their formation, animal life, and effect on people.
- The study of the hydrosphere: ocean, rivers, lakes, the water cycle. (By age 8)

Cultural Geography

- Countries are studied in many ways at all levels of MVCS, beginning at about age 3-4. Festivals are held each year to focus on specific cultures and to celebrate life together: an example being Chinese New Year, when the entire school might study China, prepare traditional Chinese fare, learn Chinese dances, and participate in a special dragon dance parade. Anything that the children find interesting is used to help them become familiar with the countries of the world: flags, boundaries, food, climate, traditional dress, houses, major cities, children's toys and games, stamps, coins, traditional foods, art, music, and history. This interweaves through the entire curriculum.
- Study of the regions, culture, and natural resources of the United States, including geography, climate, flora and fauna, major rivers and lakes, capitals, important cities, mountains, people, regional foods, traditions, etc. This begins at age 5 and continues at increasing depth at each level.
- The detailed study of one nation at a time. Focus moves over the years from one continent to another, as the children's interest leads them. All aspects of the nation are considered: geography, climate, flora and fauna, major rivers and lakes, cities, mountains, people, food, religions, etc.

Economic Geography

- Natural Resources of the Earth.
- Production: How natural resources are used by humankind.
- Imports and Exports: The interdependence of nations.

- History & the needs all people share
- The basic needs of humankind are food, shelter, clothing, defense, transportation, culture, law, religion or spiritual enlightenment, love, and adornment. (This study begins at age 5-6 and continues throughout the curriculum.)
- The concept of time and historical time is developed through many activities and repeated at deeper complexity from age 5:
 - Telling time on the clock
 - Time-lines of the child's life
 - Time-lines showing the activities of a day, week, month, year
 - Family trees
 - Time-line of the Earth's history
 - Time-line from 8,000 B.C. to 2,000 A.D. to study ancient to modern history
- The story of the evolution of the planet and its life forms over the eons is first studied at about age 6, along with an overview of human history. This is repeated throughout the curriculum in increasing depth of study.
- Each year the child continues to study and analyze the needs, culture, technology, and social history of various periods in history. The trends of human achievement are charted, such as the development of transportation, architecture, great inventions, and great leaders.
- By age 8, students begin to study the earliest humans, ending with an introduction to the first farmers. They consider early societies in terms of how they organized themselves to meet the common needs of all peoples: food, clothing, shelter, defense, transportation, medicine, arts, entertainment, government, and religion.
- The Upper Elementary level (ages 9-12) history program follows a three year cycle of thematic study. Students study whichever themes are being presented that year regardless of their age. In year 1 of the cycle, the class will focus on the creation of the universe, formation of the earth, evolution of life, and early human civilizations. These topics were first introduced at the lower elementary level. At this level, students will go into considerably greater depth and prepare increasingly sophisticated projects and research reports.
- Continuing the three-year cycle of thematic history study at the Upper Elementary level (ages 9-12), in year 2 of the cycle, the class will focus on ancient civilizations, including the Mesopotamian cultures, Greece, Rome, ancient China, Byzantium, ending with an introduction to the Middle Ages.

- In the third year of the three- year cycle of thematic history study at the Upper Elementary level (ages 9-12), the class will focus on American studies, including an introduction to the history of the United States, American folk culture, technology, children's literature, government, and geography. The class will also consider Pre-Colombian Central and South American cultures, the Native American peoples of North America, the age of exploration, and the immigrant cultural groups who came to America from Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Science

- Differentiation between living and non-living things. (Age 3-4)
- Differentiation between animals and plants; basic characteristics (Age 3-5)
- Observation of animals in nature.
- First puzzles representing the biological parts of flowers, root systems, and trees, along with the anatomical features of common animals. These are first used by very young children and puzzles, then as a means to learn the vocabulary, then are related to photos and/or the "real thing," then traced onto paper, and finally with labels as a reading experience.
- Nomenclature Cards:
- Botany: identifying, naming, and labeling the parts of plants, trees, leaves, roots, and flowers.
- Zoology: identifying, naming, and labeling the external parts of human beings, insects, fish, birds, and other animals.
- Introduction of the families of the animal kingdom, and identification and classification of animals into the broad families. Introduction to the basic characteristics, lifestyles, habitats, and means of caring for young of each family in the animal kingdom. (Age 5-7)
- Introduction to ecology: habitat, food chain, adaptation to environment and climate, predator-prey relationships, camouflage, and other body adaptations of common animals.
- Advanced elementary biology study: the names and functions of different forms of leaves, flowers, seeds, trees, plants, and animals. This usually begins with considerably more field work collecting specimens or observing.
- Study of evolution and the development of life on the Earth over the eons. (Age 6 and up)
- Study of the internal parts of vertebrates: limbs, body coverings, lungs, heart, skeleton, reproduction. (Age 5-8)
- Advanced study of plants in class, greenhouse and garden: experimenting with soil, nutrients, light, etc. (Age 6 and up)
- More advanced study of the animal kingdom: classification by class and phyla. (Age 7 and up)

- The plant kingdom: Study of the major families of plant life on the Earth and classification by class and phyla. (Age 7 and up)
- Life cycles; water, oxygen, carbon-dioxide, and nitrogen. (Age 7 and up)
- Introduction to chemistry: Begins at age 6 and continues throughout the elementary science curriculum
- The three states of matter
- Basic atomic theory
- How elements are created through stellar fusion
- Elements and compounds
- Mendeleev's table of the elements
- Basic molecular theory: Building atomic models
- Physical and chemical changes
- Research into the elements and continued study of the periodic table
- Introduction to chemistry lab experiments
- Animal behavior: detailed observation. (Age 9 and up)
- Anatomy: Systems of the animal and human body. (Age 9 and up)
- Health and nutrition. (Age 9 and up)
- Ecology: Advanced study of the interrelationships of life forms. (Age 9 and up)
- Development of skills in careful observation, recording and describing, and use of increasingly sophisticated techniques of measurement.
- Development of skills using common scientific apparatus: microscopes, telescopes, hand lens, collecting field specimens, dissecting, preparing displays.
- Development of field science skills: tracking, listening, observing.
- Development of scientific inquiry skills: forming hypothesis, designing experiments, recording results.
- Study of the great inventions; machines and technology and their effect on society throughout history.

- Study of the great scientists.
- Introduction to the physical sciences: (Age 10-12)
- Geology and mineralogy
- Meteorology
- Astronomy and cosmology
- Elementary physics: light, electricity, magnetic fields, gravity, mass.
- Preparing and analyzing all sorts of graphs and data displays; basic statistics.

Practical Life Skills

One of the most important goals of Mountain Village Charter School is to develop in the very young child a strong and realistic sense of independence and self-reliance. Along with love and a stable environment, this is the child's greatest need. This area of the curriculum focuses on developing skills that allow the child to effectively control and deal with the social and physical environment in which he lives. There is a growing pride in being able to "do it for myself." Practical life begins as soon as the young child enters the school and continues throughout the curriculum to more and more advanced tasks appropriate to the oldest students.

Early Tasks (Age 3-5)

- Dressing oneself
- Learning home address and phone number
- Pouring liquids without spilling
- Carrying objects without dropping
- Carrying liquids without spilling
- Walking without knocking into furniture or people
- Using knives and scissors with good control
- Using simple carpentry tools
- Putting materials away on the shelves where they belong when finished
- Working carefully and neatly
- Dusting, polishing and washing just about anything: floors, tables, silver
- Sweeping and vacuuming floors and rugs

- Flower arranging
- Caring for plants and animals
- Table setting, serving yourself, table manners
- Folding cloth: napkins, towels, etc.
- Simple use of needle and thread
- Using common household tools: tweezers, tongs, eye-droppers, locks, scissors, knives
- Increasingly precise eye-hand coordination
- Simple cooking and food preparation
- Dish washing
- Weaving, bead stringing, etc.

This process continues logically so that older students will learn such practical tasks as:

- Caring for animals
- Sewing
- Cooking complex meals
- Working with tools
- Making simple repairs
- Basic auto maintenance
- Organizing outings
- Self-defense
- Computing tax forms
- Making consumer purchase decisions, comparison shopping, budgeting
- Maintaining a checkbook
- Applying for a job
- Earning spending money
- Mastering test taking strategies

- Caring for young children
- Interior decorating
- Making clothes
- Furniture refinishing
- Wilderness survival
- Running a small business enterprise
- Gardening

Sensory Training

These are exercises in perception, observation, fine discrimination, and classification that play a major role in helping our children to develop their sense of logic and concentration. They begin at age 3 and are a major area of concentration typically through age 5.

- Discrimination of length, width, and height
- Discrimination of volume
- Discrimination in multiple dimensions
- Discrimination among color tones
- Discrimination among geometric shapes for shape and relative size
- Discrimination among solid geometric shapes by sight and touch
- Solving of complex abstract puzzles in three dimensions
- Discrimination of intensity and nature of sounds
- Discrimination among musical tones
- Discrimination of texture by touch
- Discrimination of weight by touch
- Discrimination of temperature by touch
- Discrimination of scents

Which, in the older students, lead to such exercises as:

- Precise observation of the natural world

- Culinary discrimination
- Artistic appreciation
- Architectural appreciation
- Musical appreciation

(g) Academic and Other Learning Goals and Objectives

The following is a broad description, by subject, of our goals and approach to the K-8th grade curriculum. Please note that a more complete curriculum will be established during our planning period as we assemble our team and work with Montessori and Nature-based consultants experienced in charter school development. We will include a plan to embrace the transition to the Common Core Standards. This will give our teachers and supporting staff voice in the process of curriculum development, and provide an important opportunity for team building, consensus building, and the opportunity to incorporate a wide selection of ideas put forth by experienced team members.

Social/Emotional Learning

Goals:

- Students will collaborate effectively with their peers to complete nature-based assignments;
- Students will value the contributions of all their peers and offer equal kindness and consideration to each other and;
- Students will treat everyone with respect and advocate for the respectful treatment of all.

Curriculum: Using the principles of Nature-based learning, students will be given daily opportunities to work with their peers to solve complex problems by sharing ideas, formulating a plan for success, delegating the responsibility of implementation, supporting each other to identify snags, adjusting the plan when necessary to develop a solution and celebrating the achievement together.

Language Arts

Goals:

- Students will read at or above grade level with fluency, accuracy and enjoyment in a way that makes meaning clear.
- Students will write effectively and creatively for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- Students will practice oral presentation across all curriculum areas to develop purposeful and articulate communication skills.

Curriculum: Through use of manipulatives and a classroom environment rich in reading materials, our students will develop both encoding and decoding skills. Phonics, grammar, punctuation, word study, etymology, reference/research skills and daily writing are introduced as

spelling skills develop. Students will obtain a rich vocabulary and sophisticated oral and written skills. Children will learn to be reflective about what they read and write and to make connections between literary themes, genres and their everyday lives.

Mathematics

Goals:

- Students will demonstrate solid and applicable understanding of key concepts and principles central to the study of numbers, geometry, algebra and problem solving;
- Students will gain an appreciation for and understanding of the history of mathematics and its applications and;
- Students will participate in peer teaching to enable mastery of concepts at each level.

Curriculum:

Utilizing the Montessori method, an extensive set of manipulatives and the study of the history of math, our students' understanding of mathematics will move from the very concrete to the abstract understanding of numbers, geometry, algebra and problem solving. Through individualized and group lessons, students will learn both static and dynamic addition, subtraction, multiplication and division in the development of sound arithmetic skills. They will learn and manipulate fractions and decimals, explore concepts of equality and equivalence, geometric and algebraic concepts and principles, often utilizing self-correcting Montessori materials as well as group teaching, peer teaching and tutoring in order to master their skills.

History

Goals:

- Students will achieve comprehension of time and its passage;
- Students will develop a core understanding of the relationships between time, people and history and;
- Students will have an understanding of and appreciation for diversity and its role in societal development, locally and globally.

Curriculum:

Our Montessori curriculum is grounded in cultural studies and awareness through the stories of time, life and civilization. The study of history begins with the concept of passage of time, then geologic time and the study of civilization throughout history. Through use of the *Great Lessons* developed by Dr. Montessori, children will attain a grasp of the formation of the universe and celestial bodies, including our sun and Earth.

Later, with the use of timelines for these areas of study, as well as other materials and student research, our learners will come to understand how life developed on Earth and the role history plays in the development of culture and the impact of one's personal history on one's own development and civilization as a whole.

Geography and Culture

Goals:

- Students will experience the earth as a globe, one made of sandpaper to distinguish land and water, and later one made smooth with colored continents. They will experience the continents as puzzle maps after making the transition from globes to flat maps;
- Students will study basic principles of mapping of the earth through simple map making, puzzles and other materials;
- Students will demonstrate knowledge of landforms by building topographical maps;
- Students will explore the relationships between basic human needs and resources and the development of cultures, states and countries;
- Students will conduct an in-depth study of one of the seven continents to demonstrate their understanding of this area of study;
- Students will draw flat maps of the continents using templates of the puzzle maps and in the upper grades display geographical knowledge by creating flat maps without guides or templates and;
- Students will create personal timelines developed with the understanding of civilization's timeline.

Curriculum:

Utilizing the Montessori approach to integration of geography and culture, our students will see and understand the relationship between human labor and economic development. By examining “fundamental needs” — food, shelter, transportation, clothing, art, religion, friendship and character — children come to appreciate how all humans are united through our common, fundamental needs. This area of study explores the interconnection between physical boundaries (through the study of maps, land forms, earth features, etc.) and the development of countries, capitals, language, economics, government and culture.

Science

Goals:

- Students will experience the distinction between Life Sciences and Physical Sciences;
- Students will explore Life Science through the study of humans, animals and plants;
- Students will experience Physical Science through experiments with liquids, solids and gases and in the various states they can manifest;
- Students will learn and practice the Scientific Method;
- Students will study the history of science and how it impacts our world;
- Students will follow the development of the earth and earth materials and;
- Students will learn and practice the scientific method.

Curriculum:

Students will begin their study of science with botany, zoology, biology, and earth science through the exploration of history, discovery and the use of categorization and naming. They will employ the Scientific Method as they move through these lessons and into the more advanced areas of life science, earth science, physics, chemistry, human biology and the plant and animal kingdoms. These concepts are reinforced by the use of experiments and Montessori

impressionistic charts designed to help children grasp complex/abstract phenomena. Additionally, the approach will integrate hands-on study, by focusing on process and techniques of discovery.

Practical Life

Goals:

- Students will experience concentration and greater skill through self-chosen work.
- Students will develop fine and gross motor skills and the fundamental movements we make as they learn to care for themselves and others.
- Students will develop executive functioning skills by experiencing tasks that require motor planning and have a beginning, middle and end.
- Students will care daily for their school environment, both inside and outside of the classroom.
- Students and Faculty will work collaboratively to establish green practices within the school setting.
- Students will work collaboratively to establish a caring community by developing and demonstrating grace and courtesy skills and respect for all members of the community.

Curriculum:

A unique element in the Montessori tradition is the area of Practical Life where skills pertaining to care of one's self, the environment and all living things are taught with the goal that students become fully capable and responsible adults. It is in Practical Life where our youngest students develop their fine and gross motor skills learning to dress, pour, sort, wash and dry dishes and prepare simple foods, among other basic activities.

As they mature, our students will also aid in maintaining their School both inside and out, all with an emphasis on being stewards of their community and surroundings. Students and faculty will develop green practices within the school setting to foster an understanding of how to minimize our impact on the natural world.

Practical Life activities encourage independence, responsibility, self-discipline and self-reliance, and aid in the development of concentration and cooperation, thus expanding students' social and emotional education and growth. It is also here where students develop and practice skills of grace and courtesy. By establishing a school-wide atmosphere of kindness and respect, children will work cooperatively with faculty and parents to create a safe and secure learning environment where differences can be recognized and valued, and diversity celebrated. This prepares the students for the experience of community service.

World Languages

Goals:

- Students will gain exposure to and grade-appropriate proficiency in one or more foreign languages, developing skills in speaking, writing and reading;
- Students will be able to communicate daily needs and wants in a foreign language;
- Students will have a basic knowledge of foreign cultures.

Curriculum:

One or more foreign languages will be integrated into all classroom levels to expand the minds and hearts of our students. Through the use of supplemental Montessori materials, other self-correcting resources, as well as individual and group teaching, students of all ages will work toward proficiency in reading, writing and communication skills in the language(s) studied.

Students will begin with basic vocabulary and conversational practices. During the elementary years, students will formalize existing skills and learn more advanced concepts. In addition, students will focus on the culture of the countries where these foreign languages are spoken. The study of foreign language will enable our children to communicate with others within and beyond their immediate community, with an aim toward the development of a global citizenry.

Civics and Service

Goals:

- Students will practice core values of kindness and consideration in the classroom and beyond.
- Students will study the history of service and community building.
- Students will understand, appreciate and participate in community service.
- Students will understand and appreciate diversity of all kinds and its impact on *Mountain Village Charter School*, as well as the greater local and global communities.
- Students will participate in community service and service learning programs and reflect upon those experiences.
- Students will participate in community projects that reinforce their understanding of the importance of caring deeply for our environment.

Curriculum:

Service and responsibility for others is a core Montessori value and as such will play a key role at the *Mountain Village Charter School*. Our lower elementary students will have ample opportunity to volunteer both within the school community and beyond.

As they mature, our students will integrate service learning across areas of their curriculum. Students will be encouraged and supported as they serve their community in ways directly related to their studies. Those service experiences will then be brought back into the classroom through reflection — discussion, oral and visual presentations. The Civics and Service curriculum will teach students to appreciate diversity of all kinds.

Technology

Goals:

- Students will become familiar and comfortable with existing technologies leading to use in research and communication across all disciplines;
- Students will understand the history and impact of technology on human society;
- Students will use appropriate technology for research and communication.

Curriculum:

Our technology curriculum will enable our students to work confidently with existing and developing technologies given the interconnectedness of our 21st century world.

Computers and software will be used as tools to aid in our students' educational needs and development in areas such as research and communication projects. Students will learn to utilize the Internet; organize data via databases, spreadsheets and graphing tools; and master word processing skills. Additionally, some of the supplementary, self-correcting software developed from within the Montessori community will be used by our students in support of their studies. The availability of computers and technological study within the school setting will enhance our students' ability to explore, discover and problem solve. This element of our curriculum is especially important, as we recognize that many of our students may not have access to appropriate computer literacy development at home. Technology is the backbone of our new economy and evolving culture and all students must be taught to be critical and wise consumers of technology.

Visual and Performing Arts

Goals:

- Students and their teachers will integrate arts education across the curriculum, enhancing all areas of study;
- Students will understand the historical development and context of the visual and performing arts and;
- Students will use visual and performing arts to explore and enhance story-telling skills alongside the development of their creativity, communication and technology skills.

Curriculum:

We will integrate the arts across the curriculum, enhancing all areas of study. The role of visual and performing arts will be integral for our students as it is for Montessori students around the world. Story telling through words, visuals, music and performance will be utilized as teaching tools by Faculty. It will also be used creatively by students as a means of articulating their understanding of civilization and culture, reading, writing, math, and science. The history of visual and performing arts will also be integrated into the curriculum. In addition, students will have the opportunity to explore their individual interests in each of these areas through research, electives, individual and group projects. While developing their artistic communication skills, students will be expected to utilize technology in the study, practice and production of their creative work.

Physical Education and Health

Goals:

- Students will participate in a basic physical education program aimed at meeting the health needs of children and early adolescents.

- Students will understand human development through an age appropriate approach, exploring and promoting healthy sense of self.
- Students will understand the value of teamwork and sportsmanship via cooperative games and team sports.

Curriculum:

While building a healthy sense of self through physical activity and fitness, our students will also have the opportunity to learn the importance of team building and teamwork through cooperative games and group sports. Our physical education program will be geared toward building physical strength and coordination to the best of each student's abilities, rather than competitive play. Our students will be given a physically enhanced and rewarding experience that contributes to a lifetime of healthy and active living. We will utilize programs such as Adventure Curriculum for Physical Education (ACPE) and FitnessGram, or other nationally used, evidence-based curricula and tools. Our age appropriate Health curriculum will explore human development including friendship, adolescent development, peer pressure, drug and alcohol education, sexuality, nutrition, stress reduction and balanced, healthy living.

(h) Achievement tests to be used to measure pupil academic and other goal achievement including, but not limited to, objective and age-appropriate measures of literacy and numeracy skills, including spelling, reading, expository writing, history, geography, science, and mathematics.

In the Montessori classroom, the child is observed every day and those observations are recorded by the classroom teachers and serve as a core reference for developing progress assessment. In the *Mountain Village Charter School*, we will also utilize additional means of formal and informal assessment, including but not limited to objective and age-appropriate measures of literacy and numeracy skills, including spelling, reading, expository writing, history, geography, science and mathematics, to satisfy both national and state requirements, and to quantitatively measure each child's progress. We will comply with 194-B:8, V, "At least annually, and near the end of each school year, a chartered public school shall evaluate the educational progress of each pupil, as specified in RSA 194-B:3 II(h). Such evaluation shall include, but not be limited, to the New Hampshire statewide education improvement and assessment program, as provided in RSA 193-C. The cost of the state assessment program shall be borne by the state." The *Mountain Village Charter School* will also use assessment methods that correlate with skill areas across the curriculum, including activities using materials that measure mastery, developing student portfolios of work samples and group and individual projects and reports. These evaluation methods will be applied at least weekly, using results to make regular adjustments to each individual's learning tools and strategies in order to ensure academic success.

Assessments will be conducted when our students first join the school community to determine the best ways to reach them and identify their skill levels, especially, though not limited to, areas of reading and math. As the number of public Montessori schools increase, so, too, do Montessori-gearred assessment tools. We will utilize standard evaluation products throughout the

year, such as those for literacy, developed by Marie Clay, among others, alongside the Richardson Mathematics Assessment or similar standardized tests that are employed by Montessori and non-Montessori schools alike.

During the planning period, the *Mountain Village Charter School* will further develop and evaluate assessment tools, schedules and practices for our students. While our youngest children will play a modest role in developing their individualized learning plans, as students mature their role becomes more significant in planning their course of study. Older students and their teachers will develop individualized programs and work together to ensure that all the set goals are met. At least twice a year, reports will be issued for student and parent review. Additionally, formal teacher conferences will be held with students and their parents/guardians. It is expected that these conferences will take place at least twice per year, in the early fall to establish academic, personal and social growth goals, then again in the spring to review progress and evaluate and improve implementation plans.

Throughout the year, students will be shown many ways to present and reflect on their accomplishments. They will write at least weekly in journals covering many areas of the curriculum. An important role of this journaling will be to aid students, teachers and parents/guardians in evaluations. Teachers will guide students as they develop their portfolios designed to capture and highlight pivotal lessons, projects and touch points that characterize each student's journey throughout the year and show each student's ability to organize what he has learned. Teachers will keep charts of progress for each child in math and language, recording completed activities and making note of those skills that need further practice. These tools and others that may develop during our planning and implementation periods will enable teachers and their students to articulate growth and identify difficulty, thus ensuring that the most successful learning can occur for each child.

While the *Mountain Village Charter School* Board and Faculty will work together to finalize an annual assessment calendar, it is likely that it will resemble the following:

- Daily Observations and recording of those observations using checklists and other means of adjusting the personalized learning plans and facilitating the teachers' work in recording and communicating each student's progress. This documentation will be made available to students and parents/guardians at any time upon request.
- Student Portfolios of their best work will provide our students, their teachers and parents/guardians with a powerful means of assessing working knowledge across all areas of the curriculum throughout the year.
- Group Projects and Collaborative Presentations will enable students and teachers to evaluate their skills at working cooperatively to solve problems, developing effective leadership, sharing and coordinating tasks and communicating efficiently.
- Progress Reports based on observation and linked to the individualized learning plan will be analyzed by teachers, students and parents/guardians. Issued approximately four times per year, these will assess academic progress as well as personal growth and development.

- Teacher Conferences will be held at the beginning and end of each academic year with students and their parents/guardians to establish or review learning plans, goals and progress.
- Standardized Testing will begin in third grade with the required New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP), and will be given in accordance with the state’s timelines. Additionally, any state and national testing requirements will be integrated into this schedule as dictated by the law.

(i) For schools offering high school grade levels, graduation requirements sufficient to ensure that the school has provided an adequate education for its pupils.

Not Applicable.

(j) Staffing overview, including qualifications sought for professionals and paraprofessionals.

To ensure that students at *Mountain Village Charter School* are supported in their academic endeavors and personal growth, we will seek highly qualified, nurturing educators who will treat them with dignity and respect. Our students will feel safe, encouraged and thereby free to mature, develop and reach their full potential.

We will seek educators who will serve as leaders, guides and role models, and who will challenge our children to challenge themselves.

Our Lead Teachers will preferably hold, at minimum, 4-year liberal arts degrees and will have or be willing to pursue Montessori training. They must understand and believe in nature-based and Montessori philosophy and materials and be familiar with individualized observation and record keeping. They must also be able to adapt Montessori methods and curriculum to the *New Hampshire Core Curriculum* and vice versa. *Mountain Village Charter School* teachers will be inquisitive, reflective, creative problem solvers, and committed to the school’s mission.

Our Assistant Teachers must demonstrate their ability to embrace Montessori and nature-based approaches and will be expected to fully support the *Mountain Village Charter School* Mission.

As per New Hampshire’s charter school statute, RSA 194-B:14. IV, a minimum of 50% of our Lead Teachers will hold New Hampshire teaching certificates or have at least three years of teaching experience.

In addition to our teachers, who will be responsible for the personal and academic growth of our students, we plan to create the position of Learning Coordinator. The Learning Coordinator will oversee curriculum implementation throughout the school, have special education experience, and believe in our nature-based Montessori philosophy. This person will support teachers as necessary and coordinate with outside consultants to ensure that any outside programming correlates with the school’s educational mission. The Learning Coordinator will serve as the

liaison for special education issues and work with sending school districts to coordinate delivery of special services in a manner that is true to our schools' mission and values to the greatest extent possible. In our dynamic teaching environment, professional development will be particularly important and our Learning Coordinator will work with our teachers, parents and administrator to coordinate professional development opportunities that meet the needs of our school, students, staff and families.

Our Head of School will be Montessori trained and hold, at minimum, a 4-year liberal arts degree and have considerable experience in the Montessori setting. This individual will be responsible for the daily operations and management of the school and be the liaison with the state, sending school districts, and with the greater community for the purpose of securing/coordinating resources and fundraising.

Using a combination of a Learning Coordinator and a Head of School will ensure that our school meets the requirements of all local and state agencies, is sustainable in terms of human and financial resources, and will serve to maintain a consistent school atmosphere and educational approach across all classrooms. This structure will also support individual teachers as they work to meet our school's goals. It is likely that in the early stages of our school's growth, the roles of Learning Coordinator and School Administrator will be fulfilled by one person.

Professional development will be a core element at the *Mountain Village Charter School*, aiding in high teacher retention and the creation and maintenance of a positive atmosphere. This will also enable ongoing support, assessment and improvement of the Mission and goals. It will substantively provide a means of evaluation and improvement in the work of those charged with teaching our children and ensuring the success of our School.

(k) Personnel compensation plans, including provisions for leaves and other benefits, if any.

Salary

Our Head of School, Learning Coordinator and Lead Teachers will be paid a salary. The salaries of these full-time personnel shall be paid bi-weekly (assuming approval is granted by the Commissioner of the Department of Labor).

Assistant Teachers, paid Tutors, and all non-teacher personnel, whether full-time or part-time, will be paid on an hourly rate as employees or as independent professionals based on negotiated rates.

Vacation

The *Mountain Village Charter School* will publish an annual calendar of holidays and vacations during which the School will officially be closed. Our schedule will be consistent with that of the regional public schools. Full-time teachers will also receive a maximum of two days of paid personal leave per year. Personal leave days must be used during the school year in which they are accrued.

Sick Leave

Full-time salaried staff will receive five sick days per school year. Sick leave is cumulative from year to year up to a maximum of twenty days. Part-time teachers will receive two (2) sick days per year. For purposes of sick leave for part-time teachers, one day will equal the number of hours in that employee's regularly scheduled work day.

Other Benefits

The *Mountain Village Charter School* will offer health and other benefits to its full-time, salaried employees. Such benefits may be offered as a choice system with a specific annual election or as a specific insurance plan provided by the School with an employee contribution. Board policy and availability of specific benefit programs will determine the specific benefit type offered. Board policy and the requirements of specific benefit programs will determine whether, and to what extent, part-time personnel will be eligible for benefits and at what percent of full-time equivalent allocation.

General Provisions

The *Mountain Village Charter School* will comply with all federal, state, and local laws and rules related to pre-employment screening, hiring, employment compensation and leave, and reserves the right to amend the above personnel provisions as necessary to comply with applicable laws and rules, and as otherwise necessary.

- (l) Pupil transportation plan, including reasonable provision from the charter school's own resources for transportation of pupils residing outside the district in which the charter school is physically located.**

As mentioned in Section D of this application, the site of *Mountain Village Charter School* will be finalized during our initial planning period, giving us well over a year to do so. We will seek a centrally located site both to accommodate the resources of the Pemi-Baker School District, and for ease of access for families traveling from outside the Plymouth region.

We are in the process of contacting the Pemi-Baker Superintendent of Schools, Mark J. Halloran, and members of his team, to address the issue of transportation, to establish clarity on this issue, among others.

For purposes of transportation, *Mountain Village Charter School* will follow the guidelines of 194-B:2,V which states: "Pupils who reside in the school district in the same terms and conditions as provided for in RSA 189:6 and 189:8 and that transportation is provided to pupils attending other public schools within that district. However, any added costs for such transportation services shall be borne by the charter school." As a result, students attending *Mountain Village Charter School* who reside in the host district shall ride district transportation with the charter school providing for added route costs, if so billed.

For students attending the *Mountain Village Charter School* from outside the host district, we will serve as an open enrollment school under RSA 194-B:1, VI. Given the very limited funding per student, and the lack of guarantee for any additional funding above the state allotment per student, students from outside of the host district must either request their assigned districts to transport them, or arrange for their own transportation. The *Mountain Village Charter School* will make every effort to support families as they explore transportation options and facilitate ride sharing between families of students from outside the district through an online database or other means.

(m) Statement of assurances related to nondiscrimination according to relevant state and federal laws.

The Montessori method embraces diversity. The *Mountain Village Charter School* will celebrate diversity in all its forms. The School will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or marital or veteran status in the selection of students or staff or in the administration of the School or in any other way that is prohibited by law. The Board of Trustees will develop and adopt a policy and will have administrative procedures to address any concerns.

(n) Method of coordinating with a pupil's local education agency (LEA) responsible for matters pertaining to any required special education programs or services including method of compliance with all federal and state laws pertaining to educationally disabled pupils.

Charter School Responsibility & Method of Coordinating with Student's Sending School District

The *Mountain Village Charter School* will comply with all federal and state special education laws and rules applicable to New Hampshire charter schools.

Charter Public Schools & Special Education

As an open enrollment school, the *Mountain Village Charter School* will accept applications from any child who is a New Hampshire resident and will discuss the school with any interested parent. In accordance with New Hampshire law (RSA 194-B:8), the *Mountain Village Charter School* will not discriminate against any child with a disability as defined in RSA 186-C. Under New Hampshire's charter school statute, RSA 194-B:11, III, when a child with disabilities attends a chartered public school, all current options available to the parent and the school district are retained.

In order to ensure appropriate and adequate services will be provided for the students, Mountain Village Charter School will create an IEP team for each student with disabilities. The IEP team will consist of, at minimum, a representative from the resident school, parent, and a representative from Mountain Village Charter School.

School District Special Education Responsibility

ED 1104.01, effective 6/28/08, sets forth the following sequence of the special education process:

- (a) Referral;
- (b) Evaluation;
- (c) Determination of eligibility;
- (d) Development and approval of the IEP;
- (e) Placement;
- (f) Ongoing monitoring of the IEP; and
- (g) Annual review of the IEP.

It is clear pursuant to RSA 194-B:11, III, that decision-making responsibility for the special education process for children with disabilities attending a public charter school remains with the child's sending school district. In addition, RSA 194-B:11, III provides that the sending school district remains responsible for the funding for children with disabilities attending a chartered public school. Any federal funding or other funding available to a sending district related to special education, to the extent and in a manner acceptable to the funding source, shall also be directed to the receiving chartered public school on an eligible per pupil basis pursuant to RSA 194-B:11, IV. These important provisions allow the responsible sending district and the Mountain Village Charter School to cooperate creatively to meet a student's special education needs. The sending district will be required to provide the *Mountain Village Charter School* with a complete copy of each student's IEP for implementation and monitoring purposes.

(o) Admission procedures

We are committed to building a diverse community of learners and their families who embrace the Nature-based Montessori approach to education and recognize the unique journey that this opportunity provides and requires. Admission to the *Mountain Village Charter School* shall be open to any student who resides in the State of New Hampshire. Methods of admission shall not be designed, intended or used to discriminate or violate individual rights in any manner prohibited by law.

For the success of the school, prospective families will need to be educated on and be committed to our educational approach. We will provide interested families with literature and opportunities to learn about the school formally and informally from our Head of School, Learning Coordinator, and teachers.

The *Mountain Village Charter School* will follow the basic method of admissions that defines charter schools nationwide:

- Admission shall be blind; Except as described in enrollment provisions on page 41.
- Should the number of applicants exceed capacity, students will be chosen by a lottery system, with a wait list developed from the lottery overflow.

At a minimum, the admissions process will include the following:

1. Prospective students and their families will tour the School and attend informational meetings at which our educational approach and school expectations (including a commitment from families to volunteer in the school community) of students and their families will be explained.
2. Application packets with information about the School, its philosophy and expectations of attending students and their families will be shared, along with student-related policies. Parents will be asked to sign an agreement indicating their understanding of the School's Mission and expectations as part of the admission process.
3. Interested families will then submit their application.
4. A committee will review the applications to be sure all information is complete.
5. To successfully develop functioning classrooms and at the same time ensure the opportunity that our school experience is available to all. Children may attend regardless of whether or not they have previous Montessori experience.
6. Should applicants exceed the number of allotted slots, a formal lottery, organized by grade, will be held. Those not accepted in the lottery will be placed on a waiting list in the order determined by the lottery.
7. All students will receive notification of either acceptance or wait-listed.
8. Accepted students and their families will be required to sign an agreement to fulfill a certain number of volunteer hours in support of the school and to fill out Student and Family Interest Surveys that will assist teachers in the development of personally meaningful and relevant project-based learning experiences. No student will be enrolled without submitting these forms.

Soon after the admission process is complete, the *Mountain Village Charter School* will hold meetings for admitted students and their families.

The Board of Trustees of the *Mountain Village Charter School* will establish an Admissions Committee. We reserve the right to have the Admissions Committee further develop and amend the specific admissions process during the planning year.

Enrollment Provisions

Mountain Village Charter School will offer automatic re-enrollment to its students, provided they are in good standing (as decided by a team including the Lead Teacher, Learning Coordinator and Head of School). Families will have to provide a letter of intent by a stated date preceding the lottery, so there is clarity about available spaces.

- *Mountain Village Charter School* will admit from the wait-list should space become available after the lottery.
- Siblings of children already enrolled at the School will receive preference.
- The Board will reserve the right to give preference in enrollment to children of School Faculty as part of the employee benefits package.
- Children of the Founders¹ of the *Mountain Village Charter School* will receive priority for placement, within a reasonable ratio of the student body, as a means of recognition of their sweat equity in establishing the School.

(p) Philosophy of pupil governance and discipline, and age-appropriate due process procedures to be used for disciplinary matters including suspension and expulsion.

A core value of the *Mountain Village Charter School* is the development of leadership skills within the classroom environments and school-wide. In multi-age classrooms, and through our carefully designed curriculum, *Mountain Village Charter School* students will develop important self-monitoring, communication, and leadership skills as they progress academically and develop socially. Self discipline, self-advocacy, governance, communication and conflict resolution will be inherent to the curriculum.

It will be a priority at the *Mountain Village Charter School* that students are physically and emotionally safe while at school. In our planning period, a code of ethics will be established to address this priority both with regard to infringements on safety and respect, and to create clear and meaningful methods of problem solving.

To do so, we will draw on Dr. Maria Montessori's work which strongly emphasizes peace and conflict resolution. She developed many tools to help children and their teachers resolve disagreements and address problems and issues that arise in the school setting. Our Learning Coordinator will work to support teachers in addressing any behavior issues they are experiencing with students in their classrooms in a manner that is respectful of the student, their family and in keeping with our mission.

To facilitate communication skills, even our youngest students will be taught to utilize these Montessori resources. For example, the *Peace Table* offers a space away from the work area, neutral territory where children in disagreement can talk about their feelings and eventually find solutions. The *Peace Loft* or other *Peace Spaces* provide places where children can go to remove themselves from a difficult situation, or just take some quiet time to regroup before returning to work and/or addressing a difficulty. These tools provide students with a means of monitoring their own behavior.

¹ Defined as persons who have volunteered 200 hours or more toward the startup of Mountain Village Charter School between Jan. 2012 and Sept 2013

Of course, as in all aspects of life, there will also be ample places to practice simple conflict resolution outside of these designated areas — the playground, the lunch table, etc. Additionally, there are opportunities for mediation conducted by teachers for the younger students, and by students, when appropriate, for our older students. As the children get older, they will study and integrate methods of conflict resolution to ensure that the educational community buys into the method of problem solving. In the first days of school, teachers will explain the tools and work collaboratively and interactively with their students to establish basic classroom rules and guidelines to be followed by all. Our children will learn to problem solve and achieve resolution in the context of our safe and peaceful environment.

Disrespectful or continually disruptive behavior will not be accepted. The School’s written code of ethics will outline appropriate responses to such behaviors. All issues that resist being resolved within the classroom will be addressed with a team effort involving administrators, teachers and the student’s family. Families will be partners in forming corrective behavior plans and involved at every stage of the process through meetings and written information. Although we will work to avoid it, suspension and/or expulsion from the school may be the end result of this process. A detailed behavioral expectation policy and discipline procedure policy will be established by staff and board members in the planning phase of our charter.

(q) Method of administering fiscal accounts and reporting, including a provision requiring fiscal audits and reports to be performed by an independent certified public accountant.

The *Mountain Village Charter School* will follow New Hampshire public school accounting guidelines and will put in place internal accounting controls necessary to safeguard its assets. The School will maintain accurate financial records in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) for non-profit corporations. An annual financial report will be produced with audit by an independent certified public accountant.

The Board of Trustees will appoint a Treasurer to provide the oversight necessary for monitoring the financial status of the School. The Treasurer shall report the financial status of the School to the Board at least monthly. The Board shall also adopt policies for the financial management of the School, including policies on conflicts of interest for Board members and Faculty. Accounting activities will consist primarily of the bi-weekly payroll paid to school personnel and the maintenance of an accounts payable system to track amounts due to vendors.

A general account will be set up for the administration of funds and the Treasurer and named members of the Board will have check-writing authority. Each individual with check-writing authority will be covered by a fidelity bond in accordance with the guidelines of the New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration.

Except for emergency purchases approved by the School's authorized personnel (up to a maximum to be established by the Board), all expenditures and contracts will be handled through an encumbrance system of purchase orders for clear tracking of expenditures and status of account balances.

The *Mountain Village Charter School* will comply with all requirements specified in the law pertaining to reporting requirements (RSA 194-B:10, I-V). This law requires an annual report, annual financial audit and report, program audit, and participation during the annual school budget process. The School will also comply with all requirements set forth in ED 318.07 regarding the contents of its annual report. As required by law the annual report will be provided to the state board, local board and any person who requests it. In addition a summary version of the annual report and periodic reports will be provided to the parent or guardian of each student at the School and shall be made available to the legislative body.

The Board of Trustees will select an independent auditor annually to complete the required annual audit and report. The audit will address accounting practices and review the School's internal controls. The audit will be conducted in accordance with applicable generally accepted accounting principles. It is anticipated that the annual audit will be completed within six months of the close of the fiscal year. The Board of Trustees will review and respond to the audit report, if necessary, and include the audit results in its annual report.

(r) Annual budget, including all sources of funding

Please see the budget in Appendix B.

The included budget reflects estimated expenses for our planning year, and for the subsequent 5 years of operation.

We have developed a list of our most likely and most important mission-driven plans and costs, recognizing that the budget as represented surpasses the expected income in the first few years. *Appendix C* also includes expected sources of revenue related to the federal start-up grant, and the state per-pupil allotment based on our projected enrollment. Work to raise the additional funds necessary to support the budget has already begun and will increase in intensity once the charter has been granted. During our planning period we will also examine the feasibility of additional revenue sources, including extra-curricular activities, which might bring income as well as positive publicity to the school.

As mentioned in the introductory section of this application, we have entered into this project with the full understanding that the state per-pupil allotment is rarely enough to support a New Hampshire independent charter school's full goals and mission and guarantee sustainability. We will offset this gap through of the fundraising efforts of the *Mountain Village Charter School* Foundation including securing grant monies, and private and corporate contributions. Strategic partnerships and other fundraising efforts will also be important. Rather than seek out a few high

dollar investors, we hope to cultivate many committed supporters from the business community and the greater community to support the Mission of the *Mountain Village Charter School*.

From the outset, *Mountain Village Charter School* Founders, Board Members, Staff and parents/guardians will understand the need to augment the state-provided funds to deliver the quality and variety contained in the curriculum that is at the very core of this project. Contributions by those who join the School community will take many forms-time in the classroom, assistance in various areas dependent on expertise (computer support, construction, etc.), and some parents may consider financial contributions if they are able. All donations will be tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.

Once the *Mountain Village Charter School* has been established, the Board of Trustees will organize a fundraising committee. This committee's mission will be to support the school's economic viability. The committee will focus on securing the support of local, state and national foundations and charitable organizations as well as cultivating support from community members and businesses. The unique character of the School, its blend of nature-based, Montessori approach to teaching and the resource and value it brings to our local community will be highlighted in our fundraising efforts. A major focus of the committee will be to begin to develop an endowment fund. School-focused fundraising will include events small and large, aimed at financial gain and the solidifying of the school community and Mission.

(s) School calendar arrangement and the number and duration of days pupils are to be served pursuant to RSA 194-B:8, III

The *Mountain Village Charter School* will follow a 180-day school year in accordance with the RSA 194-B:8, III, and expects to follow the calendar of our host district in order to best coordinate transportation services. Any school-specific changes to the schedule will be monitored carefully to ensure that our students meet the required number of attendance hours.

It is expected that days will begin at approximately 8am and end at 2:30pm, though some flexibility may be required to meet our host district's bus route schedule. Should transportation issues result in lost educational hours, we will address this loss and amend our students' school hours.

(t) Provision for providing continuing evidence of adequate insurance coverage

Pursuant to RSA 194-B:1, the *Mountain Village Charter School* will be a public school afforded the same protections as all other public schools under RSA 507(b), which provides for limited general liability for the charter school and its agents. The Board will procure, and provide evidence of, adequate insurance coverage as required by the State, including but not limited to general liability for the school.

(u) Identity of consultants to be used for various services, if known

We are fortunate to have already identified and met with several advisors and consultants from the fields of education, legal, accounting and school administration. These professionals have rich experience and are excited about our school concept and willing to share their wisdom and experience with us as we work to develop our school program. From among these, we have identified the following consultants and friends of the *Mountain Village Charter School* who have agreed to volunteer in their areas of expertise:

George R. Gautsch was born in DuBois, PA in 1944. George graduated from high school in Washington, DC in 1962; then he attended Cornell University in Ithaca, NY, graduating with a degree in political science in 1966. Upon graduation George was commissioned an Ensign in the U. S. Navy and served on active duty until 1969. After he completed his military service, George attended Washington & Lee University School of Law, graduating with a J. D. in 1972. George has been practicing law in southside Virginia since 1977. George has three children by his marriage to Kit: Sarah, Katy and Adam. After Kit's death in 1991, he married Jean in 1995 and has three step children: Don, Elizabeth and Carter.

Richard T. Hage has 43 years experience in Higher Education Administration at four institutions (State University of NY and University System of New Hampshire campuses) in the role of Director, Dean and Vice President. Mr. Hage most recently served as Vice President for Student Affairs (1986-2010), Plymouth State University (PSU). He currently works part-time at PSU overseeing Undergraduate & International Admissions, Financial Aid, and as ELS Language Center Liaison. He is actively involved in the community serving on the Board of Directors of Coop Peru and the Pemi Youth Center.

Tom Martin is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and management consultant. Tom has a BS in Accounting from the University of Delaware and an MS Organizational Development from the University of Pennsylvania. Tom has been the treasurer for the Center for Social Change in Philadelphia, PA and the Bridge House Homeless Shelter in Plymouth, NH.

Nick Mathis taught college English classes for over fifteen years. He also held the posts of Chair of Humanities, Assistant Dean, Registrar, and Director of Institutional Research at colleges in Virginia and New Hampshire. He is retired from Plymouth State University and lives in Plymouth.

Nancy Puglisi, Ph.D. is a faculty member at Plymouth State University and the Director of Organizational Wellness at the University System of New Hampshire. Dr. Puglisi directs Faculty and Staff Wellness, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and organizational transformation programs for 4300 faculty and staff members employed at USNH. At Plymouth State University Dr. Puglisi serves as the director of Personal Approaches to Transformation and Healing (PATH), Institute and Organizational Approaches to Transformation and Healing (OATH), Institute. She has introduced alternative health care programs such as Therapeutic Touch, Meditation and Organizational Wellness.

Recently she received the Health Innovative Award presented by New Hampshire Business Review and Harvard Pilgrim Health Care for innovative ideas and ongoing focus on employee well-being. Under her leadership the University System of New Hampshire received the Wellness Council of America Gold Worksite Wellness Award. She continues to strive towards producing resourceful and creative approaches to individual health promotion and organizational wellness. She published *Fishing without a Hook – Catching Moments at Work* in 2010 and recently published her second book of poetry, *Reflections from the Forest House*.

David Sobel, MEd received a BA from Williams College and an MEd from Antioch University New England. He was co-founder of the Harrisville Children’s Center in Harrisville, New Hampshire, and has served as a publicly elected school board member in both Nelson and Harrisville, New Hampshire. He has served as a staff development and science curriculum consultant to schools in New Hampshire and Vermont and has been a guest speaker and workshop leader for a variety of school and environmental organizations. He serves on the editorial board of the *Holistic Education Review* and is the author of *Children’s Special Places* and many articles on children and nature. He is currently at work on two books on developmental psychology and ecoliteracy.

David’s areas of expertise include developmentally appropriate environmental education, place-based education, inquiry science, mapmaking with children, cognitive development and developmental theory, school improvement, children and nature, parenting with nature.

Kate Newell Coupe has been a certified educator for the past 35 years. She has a BS Degree in Elementary Education with a minor in Special Education. She earned her Master of Science Degree at Wheelock Graduate School majoring in Educational Administration & Leadership. Kate is a Certified Special Educator and has many years of experience working as a teacher and administrator for students in the pre-school, elementary, middle, and high school grades.

Kate is currently in her thirteenth year as the Director of the Learning Center at Tilton Academy. Prior to Tilton, Kate was the founder and executive director for the Children’s House Day Care Center in Kennebunkport, Maine and also a child development specialist at the University of Southern Maine. She moved to Plymouth, NH in 1980 and was employed at PSU until 1999. While at PSU she was the Director of the Child Development and Family Center, a faculty member in the in the Early Childhood Department, taught courses, supervised student teachers and was the founder and director of the Child Care Resource & Referral Center. Kate has an extensive background in teaching, educational assessment and experience working with children and their families.

(v) Philosophy of parent involvement and related plans and procedures.

The students of *Mountain Village Charter School* will achieve the greatest success when our teachers and families work together. We see parents/guardians as key participants in the building of the school community and the success of the program. The regular presence of our students' parents/guardians will be part of the landscape of the *Mountain Village Charter School*.

Parent/guardian involvement will begin even before admission. As part of the enrollment process, parents/guardians will be asked to sign an agreement indicating their understanding of the mission and expectations of the students and their families.

We will ask that parents/guardians participate in school activities as schedules allow. We will request that they be ambassadors for the *Mountain Village Charter School* and that they volunteer approximately 40 hours of labor over the course of the school year. These volunteer hours can and will take many shapes and forms including but not limited to supporting classroom activities, providing needed skills or services, organizing or facilitating school events or fundraisers, etc. Parents will also be valued members of our Board of Trustees (see Governance, Section B) and fundraising Foundation. We recognize that parent education is an important part of healthy child development and academic success and, as a result, the *Mountain Village Charter School* will work with families to provide informational sessions or training opportunities on topics of value to families, such as elements that make up our educational philosophy (including the Montessori Method and Nature-based learning), parenting topics and other areas of interest.

The *Mountain Village Charter School* will work to accommodate the different needs and situations of families and will value and celebrate the variety of ways our families will be able to contribute to the education of their children and the school overall. We will have parent participation on our board (see Governance, Section B) and we anticipate the establishment of a parent organization to create an opportunity for support, discussions, problem-solving and parent education.

Parents/guardians of children at *Mountain Village Charter School* will receive regular reports on their children's academic and emotional growth (see Assessment, Section B). We are fortunate that the Montessori model offers so much in the way of communication and constant evaluation. By design it helps parents/guardians become involved and engaged in their children's life at school and their overall education. Central to our approach will be the empowerment of both parents and their children to become advocates for their education, while encouraging respectful and thoughtful dialogue. We will expect that parents/guardians will work with us to ensure that communication is two-way, by offering a variety of means for that communication to take place (e.g. written feedback, surveys, and meetings).

The *Mountain Village Charter School* will be committed to the education of everyone in our community — our students, our teachers and our parents/guardians. We will seek to bring a variety of educational opportunities to the school, and aim to shape the school as a place where people from within and beyond the school community come together to engage, experience, and

grow. Professional and family education will deepen the understanding of the Nature-based/Montessori approach, highlight issues faced by our students (e.g., the role of technology, issues of respect of others and self), and facilitate ways families can enhance the work done at school. It will help them engage in their children's educational journey, from our youngest students to our most mature.

Ultimately, we will capitalize on our diverse experiences and strengths to build a clear mission and a strong school community. The *Mountain Village Charter School* will be a community that will lead by example.

(w) A plan to develop and disseminate information to assist parents and pupils with decision-making about their choice of school

The *Mountain Village Charter School* will employ many forms of outreach to recruit and inform potential students and their families of the opportunity the school will provide. Because the *Mountain Village Charter School* stands to be the first public charter school in the Plymouth, NH region, and the first public nature-based Montessori school in New Hampshire, we will need to aid parents/guardians and our potential students in their understanding of the school. Work in this area has already begun with the creation of a 4-page overview providing an overview of the mission and philosophy of the school. The document will be used for community and parent education purposes.

Utilizing literature and organizing gatherings at homes, libraries, places of faith, and other venues, we will introduce the nature-based, Montessori method and the *Mountain Village Charter School* approach, mission and goals. Once the school is in operation, we will offer tours and observation opportunities as well.

We will also employ new technologies, creating an informative website, among other tools, to help students and their families assess the school and make an informed decision before submitting their application materials.

The Board will most likely have a recruitment committee and will partner with local service organizations to build our student body. The *Mountain Village Charter School* will establish relationships with members of the local School District as well as other districts, and with potential feeder schools (including but not limited to private Montessori pre-k/kindergarten programs in the state).

Once approved, The *Mountain Village Charter School* will hold four community outreach events in Plymouth, NH and the surrounding communities. At these events we will be introducing families to the charter school model as well as the innovative approach that The *Mountain Village Charter School* will offer.

We will be reaching out to the following organizations in order to make sure that we are reaching as many families in our region, and creating as diverse school population as possible:

- Whole Village Family Resource Center, Plymouth
- White Mountain Montessori School, Holderness
- The Blue Heron School at Squam Lakes Natural Science Center, Holderness
- Pease Public Library, Plymouth
- Mid State Montessori Center, Plymouth
- Plymouth State University Child Development and Family Center, Plymouth
- Lakes Region Community Services, Laconia
- A Lakes Region Montessori, New Hampton
- Montessori House of Children, Sanbornton
- Plymouth Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, Plymouth
- Ammonoosuc Community Health Services, Littleton, Warren
- Meredith Community Center, Meredith
- Kidworks Learning Center, Meredith
- Mid-State Health Center, Bristol, Plymouth

(x) A global hold-harmless clause

In accordance with RSA 194-B: 3, II(x) *The Mountain Village Charter School*, its successors and assigns, covenants and agrees at all times to indemnify and hold harmless the (school district), any other school district which sends its students to the charter school, and their school boards, officers, directors, agents, employees, all funding districts and sources, and their successors and assigns, (the "indemnified parties") from any and all claims, demands, actions and causes of action, whether in law or in equity, and all damages, costs, losses, and expenses, including but not limited to reasonable attorneys' fees and legal costs, for any action or inaction of the charter school, its board, officers, employees, agents, representatives, contractors, guests and invitees, or pupils.

(y) Severability provisions and statement of assurance

If any part of the charter contract is determined to be invalid or illegal by a court of competent jurisdiction, such invalidation or illegality shall not affect the remaining portions of the charter contract, which shall remain in full force and effect. Any provision of the charter school contract found by competent authority to be contrary to applicable law, rule, or regulation shall not be enforceable.

(z) Provision for dissolution of the charter school including disposition of its assets or amendment of its program plan

If the *Mountain Village Charter School* ceases operation, the Board shall consult with an attorney and the Department of Education to assure that contractual and financial obligations are met.

Upon the dissolution of the School, the assets remaining after the payment of all its liabilities, and the return of any loaned items to rightful owners, shall be distributed to such organization or organizations operated exclusively for charitable or educational purposes that qualify as an exempt organization within the meaning of 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue code of 1986, or any corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to state or local government, for a public educational purpose.

(aa) In the case of the conversion of a public school to a charter conversion school, provision for alternative arrangements for pupils who choose not to attend and teachers who choose not to teach at the charter school.

Not Applicable.

(bb) A plan for the education of the school's pupils after the charter school may cease operation.

In the event that *Mountain Village Charter School* shall have cause to cease operation, the Head of School will work with the Board to develop a student transfer process and advise all parents/guardians, Staff and Faculty of the process to be followed. To complete each student's personal file, parents/guardians shall be asked to provide a statement of intent regarding their children's education, moving forward.

The *Mountain Village Charter School* will obtain parent/guardian permission for release of information in order to notify the new schools of the impending transfers. *Mountain Village Charter School* Staff, Faculty and Board will make every effort to be available for consultation, sharing students' portfolios, individualized learning plans and other relevant materials with the receiving school. It is important to remember that our students' Montessori experience will be linked to the *NH Core Curriculum*, and so though they may be more practiced in independent work and have developed other Montessori-related skills, it is expected that these children will easily matriculate into other schools and be at or above grade level.

Each family will also receive notice by mail, in a timely fashion, advising them of the dissolution of the School and the plan for student transition. The *Mountain Village Charter School* will also help guide families toward options that may best match their needs and abilities academically, and if appropriate, geographically. And of course, the school will ensure that the receiving schools have appropriate information to facilitate the students' transitions.

(cc) In addition to an application, each charter school applicant, in consultation with the local school board, shall prepare a proposed contract.

Not Applicable.

(dd) An outline of the proposed accountability plan which clarifies expectations for evaluating the school's program and which contains an acknowledgement that a full accountability plan shall be developed and ready to implement prior to the date of opening.

The *Mountain Village Charter School* will provide the New Hampshire State Department of Education with reports on our programs and progress annually. Utilizing a variety of assessment tools and data collected from our students, Faculty/Staff and parents/guardians, we will share information about our educational impact, parental involvement, outreach methodology and an overall analysis of our goals. In addition, our annual reports will inform the Department about our student enrollment, financial operations and governance.

This reporting will address the following questions:

1. Is the School making progress toward achieving our Mission?
2. Is the School responsibly using public funds?
3. Is the School promoting student attainment of expected knowledge and skills?
4. Is the School sustainable?

Our accountability plan will be fully developed prior to the date of opening.