

## Table of Contents

Cover Sheet.....	V
Executive Summary.....	1
<b>A. Description of Founders</b>	
A.1 Profile of Founding Group.....	3
A.2 Planning.....	10
<b>B. Education Plan.....</b>	<b>13</b>
B.1 Mission and Vision of the Proposed Public Charter School.....	13
B.2 Academic Design .....	21
B.3 Support for Learning.....	56
B.4 Accountability Plan .....	74
<b>C. Operation Plan .....</b>	<b>104</b>
C.1 Organizational Structure .....	104
C.2 Governing Structure .....	105
C.3 Administrative Structure.....	113
C.4 Recruiting and Marketing .....	143
C.5 Transportation.....	146
C.6 Food Services.....	148
C.7 Student Records.....	149
C.8 Implementation of the Charter.....	150
C.9 School Management Contracts.....	154
<b>D. Facilities Plan.....</b>	<b>155</b>
D.1 Charter School Facility Identified .....	155
<b>E. Business Plan.....</b>	<b>158</b>
E.1 Finance.....	158
E.2 Financial Management and Accounting .....	160
E.3 Civil Liability and Insurance.....	164
E.4 Audit .....	165
<b>Schedule of Appendices.....</b>	<b>166</b>

### **Executive summary**

As the first public charter school in Western Maryland, Mountain Maryland Public Charter School (MMPCS) is poised to pave the way in bringing new educational opportunities to families in Allegany County. MMPCS will open in September 2011 with grades K-4. We will add a grade each year until 2015 when MMPCS will serve students K-8.

The founders of MMPCS are a group of families who support public education and are interested in expanding the public education options within Allegany County's strong school system. The MMPCS founding board is a diverse group of education, finance and legal professionals collaborating to develop a public charter school to serve the students and families of Allegany County.

A county-wide needs assessment and the Allegany County Public Schools Middle School Report of 2009 indicated that our community has a strong interest in an educational program with the elements upon which MMPCS has been based. These elements include instruction that supports active learning, arts programming, family participation in school, consistent and supportive relationships between students and faculty, advisory programming and program design that promotes students' sustained achievement throughout their academic careers.

Mountain Maryland Public Charter School's academic program is based on a learning theory called "constructivism" which assumes that all students are active and interested learners and that students and teachers learn from one another. Constructivism proposes that learning occurs as students build a knowledge base and "construct" new ideas by applying the skills they learn in new ways.

In Mountain Maryland Public Charter School's project learning approach, academic skills and project inquiry are the pillars of learning. Students learn essential academic skills in language arts, math and science curricula. Through project research, students build new understanding by applying concepts. In the course of project inquiry, students study topics that are of interest to

## Executive Summary

them, learn to ask questions, conduct collaborative research and communicate their findings to real audiences.

The MMPCS system of governance has been developed to reflect the values of the founding board and carry out the school's vision and mission. The MMPCS governance structure incorporates students' families as important participants in the education process and in the school community. The MMPCS governance model emphasizes empowerment of students, teachers and the school principal by giving them a voice on the school's Board of Directors.

The MMPCS founding board has worked diligently to identify resources and develop a comprehensive and sustainable business plan. The non-profit corporation parent of MMPCS is eligible for federally funded charter school start up grants and our operating budget is based on Maryland's charter law and related State Board of Education rulings. The founding board developed relationships with agencies, individuals and businesses throughout the community and has met with widespread enthusiasm and support for the MMPCS approach to instruction and governance.

Most importantly, our board is committed to the MMPCS vision and mission. Our board members have each made a significant contribution of time and resources to the development of an innovative learning community. Our founding board is committed to the long-term responsibility of school oversight and supporting the MMPCS Principal in building a school culture and leading instructional staff in carrying out the MMPCS mission and goals.

Our founding board is privileged to partner with Allegany County Public Schools in leading the public charter school movement in Western Maryland. With the advent of Mountain Maryland Public Charter School, Allegany County will again demonstrate the vision and commitment to students that have made its public education system the standard to meet in our region.

## A. Description of Founders

### **A. Description of Founders**

#### **A.1 Profile of Founding Group**

**A.1.1 Describe the composition of the group or partnership that is working together to apply for a charter, including each individual(s):**

- **Qualifications to operate or oversee a charter school, including any experience as it relates to the development of academic programs, operations of a school or a small business, and background in financial management;**
- **Educational training (including degrees earned and institution) that supports his/her/their qualifications to operate a charter school; and**
- **Business arrangements or partnerships with existing schools, educational programs, businesses, or non-profit organizations including all organizations or corporations of which the individuals are directors or officers.**

**Please include a one-page résumé for each founding individual in the appendix.**

**Complete an Affidavit, Disclosure, and Consent for Background and Credit Check form for each member and provide them in an appendix.**

Many aspects of operating a public charter school are similar to operating a business. Mountain Maryland Public Charter School's (MMPCS) founding group is composed of a balance of business, finance, marketing, legal, non-profit and education professionals. Because of this diverse composition, our board is well-equipped to meet the business challenges of operating a public charter school as a start-up business.

Yan Bao, has a PhD. in business administration and serves MMPCS's non-profit Board of Directors as the Treasurer and chair of the Finance Committee. Dr. Bao is currently an Associate Professor of accounting in the School of Business at Frostburg State University. MMPCS's comprehensive business plan has been developed under Dr. Bao's leadership and is informed by her experience as a Certified Public Accountant, an auditor and management consultant and Chief Financial Officer of a multi-million dollar grossing corporation. Dr. Bao is well-versed in generally accepted accounting principles and has played a critical role in establishing the financial foundation of our non-profit organization. Dr. Bao's policy and procedural experience

Mountain Maryland Public Charter School application

September 1, 2010

Page 3

## A. Description of Founders

in corporate settings has allowed the non-profit parent corporation of MMPCS to develop the internal controls and transparency necessary for the responsible stewardship of public funds.

Nidhi Jain, MBA, has played a crucial role in shaping our marketing strategy and market analysis. Ms. Jain's expertise in marketing has been instrumental in our long-term strategic planning and in our community outreach efforts. As a financial manager of multi-million dollar private equity accounts, Ms. Jain offers the experience necessary to analyze financial profiles to identify risk and big picture benefits. As a Senior Credit Analyst with Commerce Bank in Philadelphia, Ms. Jain was responsible for portfolio management, researching and developing lending recommendations and conducting operational and industry analyses of market conditions to evaluate risks and opportunities for growth. Ms. Jain's expertise in finance management has been instrumental in the development of MMPCS' business plan. Her experience as a commercial real estate financial analyst has informed the board's plan for facilities development.

Jack Wilson, who served as an educator and principal and as one of the leaders in Baltimore County's transformation school movement, brings not only a long and accomplished career but also a great passion for education. Mr. Wilson is well-known in the education community as a leader and a visionary. When Baltimore County schools wanted to address the problem of increasing racial isolation in public school, the school board asked Mr. Wilson lead the charge in the transformation school movement. He became the first principal of the first transformation school in Baltimore County. In this role, he led a school community in building an identity and culture from the ground up. He has taught in elementary and middle schools. Mr. Wilson's experience and vision as an educator has been invaluable in the design phase of MMPCS' development. His experience as an administrator and his passion for education will enable our board to carry out the mission with clarity and focus.

Veronica Mingoelli, MS, OTR/L has spent her career working in school-based settings and has direct experience with the regulations which govern aspects of educational programming such as IDEA and the challenges of helping students meet their learning goals. Ms. Mingoelli's training as an occupational therapist is rooted in her background as a secondary social studies teacher and the struggles she witnessed her students experience. Ms. Mingoelli has practiced as an

Mountain Maryland Public Charter School application

September 1, 2010

Page 4

## A. Description of Founders

occupational therapist in school-based settings in several suburban and rural school districts and has supported families in community-based programming. Ms. Mingolelli's professional experiences give her a unique perspective on the developmental, psycho-social and neurological underpinnings of children's skill development and the supports necessary for success. This perspective is essential in supporting the board's mission of creating an academic design and school culture which honors every student's abilities and supports every student's achievement.

Operating a charter school also requires an experienced and resourceful legal professional such as Jennifer Walsh Hare, Esq. Ms. Walsh Hare's legal experience has supported the development of a comprehensive and mission-centered governance system. Ms. Walsh Hare's broad base of legal experience includes drafting opinions for the Supreme Court of the State of New Mexico, policy development for a United States Senator and community level advocacy for low-income families and children. Under Ms. Walsh Hare's leadership the founding board has developed a unique system of governance which will foster long-term stability and a working board of directors composed of parents and community members equipped to oversee MMPCS operations. As chair of the Governance Committee, Ms. Walsh Hare's extensive knowledge of Maryland statutes and COMAR regulations enabled the board to develop a comprehensive governance and school operations plan which balances the pursuit of MMPCS' vision with the regulatory compliance and legal obligations incumbent upon all public schools. Ms. Walsh Hare's leadership has been and will continue to be essential for strong board oversight of MMPCS operations.

Laura Witt serves as our non-profit expert and offers essential guidance and insight on non-profit governance, policy and procedure. As the acting Executive Director of the Local Management Board, she has worked closely with community groups across Allegany County and is closely acquainted with the needs of children and families and the resources available to meet them. Ms. Witt has developed and managed a \$1.2 million budget, managed staff, developed agency policy, ensured compliance, overseen grant management and collaborated with state level agencies for local program development. Ms. Witt's experience has been critical in the development of our non-profit business plan, policies and system of governance. As chair of the Operations

## A. Description of Founders

Committee, Ms. Witt brings essential expertise in the areas of management and policy development which will be critical in the implementation and oversight phases of operations.

Michele Mathias has worked in corporate project management overseeing multi-million dollar information technology projects. Her project planning, budgeting and management skills have enabled our board to work efficiently with clear timelines and knowledge of dependencies within project areas. In her work coordinating software development projects, Ms. Mathias has developed the skills to bridge the gap between teams with varied skill sets from the business side to the technology side of a project. Ms. Mathias serves as the Secretary of the Board of Directors and her work is essential to the efficient and effective management of the Board's duties. Ms. Mathias' business acumen and professional experience will continue to be critical for successful implementation of MMPCS' operation plan and long-term board oversight.

Portia Sloan is an acclaimed scientific illustrator and photographer who has worked for major museums and publications including the American Museum of Natural History and Primedia History Group. As Art Director of the prestigious Primedia History Group, Ms. Sloan was responsible for the design and lay out of a monthly book publication on topics ranging from the Lewis and Clark expedition to General Lee and the Civil War. As part of her job, Ms. Sloan worked closely with scientists, artists, text editors and production planners to ensure an excellent end product. Ms. Sloan's professional skills and experience have brought a skilled and focused leadership to the process of crafting MMPCS' marketing strategy and she designed the MMPCS logo shown on its webpage and informational brochures. Ms. Sloan has also served as the key facilities researcher and resource for facilities guidelines and regulations.

Melinda Thoele, MSW has brought the breadth of her experience as a community organizer to the MMPCS board. Ms. Thoele was educated as a community organizer and has worked in a number of locations across the globe on behalf of marginalized children and families. Ms. Thoele has worked in education at multiple levels, including elementary, middle school and college level courses. She is presently an adjunct professor at Frostburg State University and Allegany College of Maryland. Ms. Thoele has a firm belief in the collaborative process and is an experienced mediator. She has taken professional approach to building community

## A. Description of Founders

partnerships that have enabled the MMPCS board to assess community needs more fully and to build a deep network of partners who have expressed enthusiasm for on-going collaboration with MMPCS.

Jen Amendolara is an Americorps veteran who has spent her career working in community-based programs with children and teens. Beginning in 2007, Ms. Amendolara initiated the Montessori elementary expansion at a local Montessori school. She was responsible for such varied duties as recruiting board members, creating community needs surveys, and assisting with the budget. Ms. Amendolara's experience and community service expertise have helped her to identify the needs of children and families in our community and key and on-going resources that are available to serve those interests. Her natural skill for developing connections in the community has been essential in the recruitment of qualified professional founding board members capable of putting the MMPCS vision into action.

David Mingolelli is a Physician Assistant who works in the Emergency Department at Western Maryland Regional Medical Center. He has many years of experience in school, community, and hospital settings promoting children's health and engagement in life roles. In these settings Mr. Mingolelli's professional practice has been influenced by his belief that children's development and adaptation cannot be divorced from their social, emotional and physical contexts. Mr. Mingolelli's professional experiences and philosophy have helped shape the MMPCS vision and mission. Mr. Mingolelli has been responsible for the development of the MMPCS website and has served as the primary technical liaison with the marketing committee in developing strategies to effectively communicate MMPCS' mission and educational program to the Allegany County community. Mr. Mingolelli has also served as an active member of the facilities committee in identifying potential facilities, ensuring code compliance and developing relationships with property owners.

Each board member has brought a unique set of skills and experiences which have contributed to the development of MMPCS' plan of operations. Each board member has supported the mission of MMPCS through research, attendance at meetings and a commitment to continued service on the board to oversee school operations.

## A. Description of Founders

### Other Board memberships

Portia Sloan serves as Secretary of the Board of Directors of Beginnings Montessori. Nidhi Jain Gupta serves as Vice President of the Board of Directors of Beginnings Montessori. Mindy Thoele serves as Treasurer of the Board of Directors of Beginnings Montessori. Jen Walsh Hare serves on the Board of Directors for the Allegany Law Foundation, an organization which provides free legal services to low-income clients of Allegany County.

Please see Appendix I for founding board members' resumes.

Please see Appendix II for Affidavit, Disclosure and Consent for Background Check.

### **A.1.2 List those who will become members of the school Board of Directors. Complete an Affidavit, Disclosure, and Consent for Background and Credit Check form for each member and provide them in an appendix.**

Our founding board members will continue to serve as board members of our non-profit organization and oversee Mountain Maryland Public Charter School's operations. Upon commencement of school operations, founding board members' terms will be staggered to ensure long-term stability and term-limits will begin. Mountain Maryland P.C.S.'s Board of Directors include:

Jen Amendalara

Yan Bao

Nidhi Jain

Michele Mathias

Portia Sloan

Melinda Thoele

David Mingolelli

Veronica Mingolelli

Jennifer Walsh Hare

Laura Witt

Jack Wilson

## A. Description of Founders

Once school operations begin, the current board, principal and faculty will begin identification and recruitment of school parents/guardians who will serve on board-level committees and as future board members. The chairs of board level committees will be voting members of the board.

### **A.1.3 Describe any plans for further recruitment of founders or organizers of the school.**

Our founding board is actively recruiting additional board members with fundraising and development experience.

### **A.1.4 If applicable, describe any organizations, including educational management organizations that will assist in the planning and establishment of the school. Indicate how and if they will continue to be involved throughout the opening and operation of the school.**

The founding board does not plan to contract with an educational management organization (EMO). As a grassroots community movement, the founding board feels it is important for the community to take ownership of its first public charter school and to work together to meet real needs in the community.

### **A.1.5 If the application is filed in partnership with a college, university, museum, educational institution, another not-for-profit entity, an educational management organization, or any other partner, describe the nature and purpose of the school's partnership with the organization. Provide the name of the organization along with the name, address, phone number, facsimile number, and e-mail address of a contact person for the partner organization. Attach a letter of intent or commitment from the partner organization affirming and describing the partnership.**

The application submitted for MMPCS is filed solely by the board of directors of the non-profit parent corporation of MMPCS. Our application has neither been developed by nor with the intention of co-applying with any college, university, museum, educational institution, other non-profit or EMO.

## A. Description of Founders

**A.1.6 If applicable, detail the relevant expertise of a retained consultant or professional (e.g., accounting, finance, educational management services, risk management, human resources, etc.) that will assist in the planning and establishment of the school. Indicate how and if they will continue to be involved throughout the opening and operation of the school.**

As detailed above, our board has a broad range of skills and experience essential for the operation and oversight of a public charter school. (See Section A.1.) No paid consultants have been retained by the founding board.

Trainings and resources for our board have been provided by the Maryland Charter School Network, Maryland Association of Non-profit Organizations and the Maryland State Department of Education. As needed, guidance from specialists in school finance, education law, facilities and education has been provided gratis by very generous professionals with no stake or potential financial profit in MMPCS' application development, approval or school operations. Each of these individuals has volunteered to offer guidance including reviewing documents, sharing and identifying resources and information or answering specific technical questions. No contractual arrangements or implicit understandings for services, in-kind contributions or compensation have been entered into with these expert volunteers. All of these resources remain available to the board of MMPCS which will continue to identify additional resources as the school implementation phase commences.

## A.2 Planning

**A.2.1 Planning Process: Describe the planning process that led to the decision to form a school and apply for a charter and how the founders engaged individuals with the requisite skills, competencies, and commitment in the planning process. Also, describe how parents, teachers, and other members of the community have been involved in developing the school's mission, philosophy, focus, goals, and design and how they will continue to be involved in its implementation. If the founding group has chosen to contract with an educational management organization, describe why and how this management company was chosen and what input the founding members have had in the selection process.**

## A. Description of Founders

In July 2009, President Obama announced plans for Race to the Top in which public charter schools figured prominently. This news spurred a small group of parents in Allegany County to wonder if a public charter school could meet needs across the county and complement Allegany County Public School's strong educational offerings by bringing the charter school movement to western Maryland. In the discovery phase of this project, informal inquiries were made through community connections regarding parents' interest in a public charter school in Allegany County. In addition, preliminary research was conducted on charter school's benefits to their communities overall. Research in these areas indicated that a) charter schools benefit their communities in addition to improved educational opportunities and outcomes b) there was sufficient interest in the community to proceed with further development of a plan for a public charter school.

The initial phase of planning consisted of extensive research on charter school laws, practices and models in Maryland and across the United States. During this phase information from sources such as education policy think tanks, charter school advocacy groups, charter school operators and administrators and resources specific to Maryland were evaluated.

Based on these research findings, the incorporating board members outlined an educational mission, vision and philosophy which guided project planning.

The next phase in planning was recruiting founding board members with the professional experience and expertise to develop a viable charter school design and operations plan. Informal informational meetings, which were open to all community members, were held in order to lay out basic information about charter schools in Maryland and the process of developing a charter school proposal. These meetings were well attended by parents who are supporters of public education and were willing to offer their time and experience to support the development of a local public charter school in Allegany County. Our incorporating board members requested resumes and conducted informal interviews with individuals interested in serving on a working founders board. Our current board members were selected for their expertise in education,

## A. Description of Founders

finance, business management, law, non-profit operations and governance, marketing and a demonstrated commitment to working on a community-based board.

Once a full board was assembled, the mission and vision were refined and clarified as the Educational Plan Committee researched and proposed approaches to meeting community needs. MMPCS' educational focus, goals and design have been developed by the board's Education Committee whose research has been on-going throughout the design and development phase. Recommendations and detailed proposals were presented to the board for review, discussion, revision and approval by a majority vote of board members.

Our founding board members have each demonstrated a high level of commitment to the process of establishing and overseeing a public charter school. Board members are expected to attend regular board meetings, bring their expertise and community contacts to bear on project development and contribute significant time and resources to project areas of their choosing. Each board member has signed a Board Member Agreement which is regarded as a contract between individuals and the non-profit board. (See Appendix III – Founder's Agreement)

The founding board will continue to function as a working board through the implementation phase of operations. When MMPCS begins operations, the board will oversee the operation of the school at the board level. Board members will actively recruit new board members from the body of parents/guardians whose children attend MMPCS. In addition, the founding board has forged relationships with community agencies and organizations which will help us carry out the MMPCS school mission more fully.

The founding board is composed of local families who support the mission of public education. The board has neither consulted nor contracted with an education management organization in the development of this proposal for a public charter school.

## B. Education Plan

### *B. Education Plan*

**Charter schools allow their creators and staff to be highly innovative with their curriculum and educational design while meeting the standards included in the Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum and may adopt additional standards that meet or exceed Maryland standards.**

#### **B.1.1 Mission and Vision of the Proposed Public Charter School**

**Explain the mission of the proposed charter school. The mission statement should be clear, concise and indicate what the school intends to do, for whom, and to what degree. The mission statement should include methodology and/or theme if it is a central part of the school's vision. An ideal mission statement should be clearly understandable to a general audience -- avoid excessive jargon and technical terminology. Also, briefly state the vision upon which the program of this school is based.**

#### VISION

The vision of Mountain Maryland Public Charter School (MMPCS) is to graduate critical thinkers and life-long learners who have the skills, collaborative abilities and confidence to lead their generation through the challenges of their time.

#### MISSION

The mission of MMPCS is to promote K-8 students' academic achievement and to help them become responsible, self-reliant learners by collaborative engagement in personally meaningful, real-world problem solving.

MMPCS will carry out this mission by employing a Reggio Emilia-inspired project learning approach in which teachers facilitate students' active participation in asking questions about their world and the development of the academic, intellectual and social skills necessary to discover answers.

## B. Education Plan

MMPCS will create an environment which promotes students' ownership of learning and encourages students and teachers to take intellectual risks. MMPCS seeks to promote students' awareness of themselves, the world around them and to prepare them to engage fully in their community.

### Educational Philosophy

We believe that children are innately curious and eager to learn and that a mastery of skills requires that students be afforded the opportunity to engage at his/her appropriate level of challenge.

We believe that children learn best in an environment that models empathy and appropriate assertiveness and that honors each individual's perspective and right of expression.

We believe intellectual, social-emotional and physical development are interdependent and are essential elements of each child's development.

We believe that a learning community must be flexible, adaptive, actively seeking new ways of teaching and learning and be supportive of educators' ability to reflect on and develop their teaching practices so that all children can flourish.

**B.1.2 Target Student Population: Identify the grade or age levels of the student population the school plans to serve. Describe the characteristics of your prospective students, including those likely to have special needs. Identify any targeted at-risk student populations. Explain the relationship between the student population to be served and the geographic area of the planned school's facility. Describe the relationship between the targeted student population and the school's mission.**

Mountain Maryland Public Charter School will serve students in grades K-8 who live in Allegany County. As a public charter school, MMPCS is open to all students without respect to race, ethnicity, gender, income or ability.

## B. Education Plan

MMPCS' academic program has been developed to employ evidence-based practices which are well-suited to meet the educational needs of a range of student abilities and talents. MMPCS' student body will be a reflection of the unique diversity of Allegany County including racial, cultural and socio-economic diversity. The founding board is committed to reducing barriers to participation so that all interested families will have opportunities to benefit from MMPCS' innovative educational programming. Recruitment efforts will include activities focused on identifying "hard to reach" families and families located in areas eligible for New Market tax credits or designated as High Distress Areas.

MMPCS' facility location will provide easier access to an important target demographic of students. MMPCS' planned facility will occupy 2 levels of the South Wing of the Memorial Campus in Cumberland. This site is centrally located within the county and most easily accessible to the large population centers of Cumberland, LaVale and Frostburg where the majority of families with school-aged children live.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Grades Served	K-4	K-5	K-6	K-7	K-8
Number of Students per Grade	22	22	22	22	22
Average Number of Students per class	22	22	22	22	22
Total Student Enrollment	110	132	154	176	198
Number of Teachers	6	7	8	9	10

### **B.1.3 Educational Needs of the Target Student Population:**

**Describe the need for this proposed school in the community it will serve and the target student population. Briefly discuss the educational needs of these students and describe what is special and promising about the way your school will address these needs. Describe how the community has demonstrated support for the proposed school. Give specific examples and cite the sources. Provide evidence of parental demand for the proposed school.**

## B. Education Plan

### Meeting Students' Needs

The Allegany County Public Schools Middle School Task Force Report of 2009 recommended the following strategies to improve educational opportunities for middle school students: K-8 school configuration, enhanced arts curriculum, advisory groups, block scheduling, and cross-curricular STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math). MMPCS' academic design will support ACPS' plan to put these recommendations into practice.

### K-8 Configuration

The Middle School Task Force Report of 2009 cited research on young adolescents' development which suggests that a K-8 configuration supports middle school students' academic achievement. This research suggests that a K-8 school design can limit the stress and displacement of moving into a new, much larger school during the tender middle school years. In addition, students benefit from continuing daily engagement with the trusted and supportive adults they have known throughout their school careers.

Students in a K-8 configuration benefit from older peer models and mentoring, stable relationships with students from a greater range of grades and a smaller school community. Students in K-8 schools also have extended opportunity to remain enrolled in the same school with siblings.

### Enhanced Arts Curriculum

The Middle School Task Force report cites research that indicates arts integration supports student's construction of knowledge and cognitive skills and cautions against a narrow focus on content areas which are subject to standardized testing. The task force recommends integrating arts across the curriculum.

In the MMPCS academic design, arts integration is viewed as an important means of learning and understanding, especially in mastering new concepts which are hard to articulate. Arts

## B. Education Plan

integration will be incorporated at all grades to allow all students to develop a broad repertoire of skills in expressing and knowing through the arts.

### Advisory program

Advisory programs are recommended to promote positive relationships between students and adults. Our middle school programming will incorporate small advisory groups so that each student is able to belong to and be known by a group of trusted peers and adults with cohesion over time.

### Block Scheduling

Uninterrupted work periods will allow students to engage deeply in intellectual work and project inquiry. It will also allow teachers the time to observe and evaluate students' engagement in learning activities, differentiate instruction and develop instructional strategies to help students meet the challenges of thinking deeply and critically about their work.

### Cross-curricular STEM experiences

The MMPCS curricula and educational approach support the development of the intellectual dispositions necessary for students to think like mathematicians and scientists. MMPCS's academic design integrates STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) across the curriculum. Students acquire essential academic skills in the math and science curricula: Everyday Math, Transition Math and Full Option Science System (See B.2.2 Curriculum). Students make novel applications of their science and math skills in meaningful research and problem solving in project inquiry. The meaningful application of their scientific and mathematical skills motivates students to expand their skills and knowledge in STEM areas in order to support their inquiry and promotes their self-identification as scientists and mathematicians.

### Promoting student engagement

Recent research at the College of William and Mary shows that children's scores on the Torrance tests of creativity have been falling since 1990. In contrast, IQ scores continued to rise 10 points

## B. Education Plan

with each generation. Lead researcher Kyung Hee Kim found that the drop in scores was most dramatic for children K-6<sup>th</sup> grades. (Bronson, 2010)

Other research indicates that student engagement decreases as students' progress toward middle school. (Marks, 2000) This drop coincides with the increasing emphasis on pedagogy focused on fact mastery and standardized testing.

Educational researchers propose the means of offsetting these trends is to focus more on supporting students' development of creativity through curricula that focus on inquiry. In an inquiry approach students learn essential information and skills and apply them in the context of deep and relevant research.

MMPCS' academic program provides opportunities for students to explore topics of interest and apply academic skills in meaningful research to answer their own questions. By making choices and having a voice in their learning, stable, long-term school-wide relationships and fostering the habits of self-reliant learners, students sustain their engagement in and ownership of learning throughout their academic careers and their lives.

Among educational leaders there is a strong consensus that "authentic learning" (See section B.2.1) results in improved educational outcomes. Research indicates that high performing students and at-risk students all show gains in educational outcomes when given opportunities to participate in learning activities consistent with a constructivist project learning approach. MMPCS' project approach will enhance learning outcomes for students of a range of abilities and backgrounds.

Because by the middle school years, students' academic trajectories are often set, MMPCS' academic design has been developed to offer the benefits of authentic learning to both elementary and middle school students. Early success often translates into long-term success. Authentic learning academic approaches have been widely shown to support achievement for broad range of student abilities and backgrounds. MMPCS will offer opportunities for all

## B. Education Plan

students to achieve their highest potential.

### College and Career Readiness

Recently proposed updates to No Child Left Behind include preparing students for college or the workplace by the end of grade 12. This change of focus implicitly emphasizes the need for high standards to which all students aspire. The National Common Core Standards have been adopted by Maryland and numerous other states as a means of shifting focus from inculcating facts and information to promoting students' intellectual dispositions and capacities to creatively solve complex problems and communicate the results.

Educational experts suggest that this new focus requires new pedagogical approaches.

Superimposing new standards on traditional methods will not necessarily produce improved student achievement. In order to prepare every student for college or productive employment in a changing economy, schools must support students' mastery of the "big ideas" and skills that are the foundation of the National Common Core Standards. MMPCS' project approach offers the link between new standards and evolving pedagogy. In MMPCS' project approach, students have the opportunity to research and think deeply in order to develop and substantiate their positions or findings in their research.

For more detail on the characteristics of College and Career Ready Students as described in the National Common Core Standards see Appendix IV.

### Small Class Sizes

MMPCS has made a low student: teacher ratio a priority in school design. Each grade at MMPCS will have a maximum of 22 students and be assigned a lead teacher and an instructional assistant. Inclusion programming and the MMPCS arts integration format provide additional opportunities to lower the student: teacher ratio. This low ratio provides opportunities to better meet the challenges of student-centered instruction through differentiation of instruction and detailed observation and assessment of student performance.

## B. Education Plan

### Meeting Parents' Needs

County-wide educational needs assessment data indicated that families in Allegany County have a strong interest in educational programming with active learning, arts programming and academic rigor. These elements are the foundation of MMPCS' educational program which is designed to meet the needs that parents throughout our county have expressed.

MMPCS has developed a system of school operations and governance that draws on parent involvement in school life. Parent involvement in the life of the school will be a fundamental element of school culture. Through committee membership and leadership, service on the board or volunteer service in school operations parents will have numerous opportunities for involvement in the school community. These opportunities for participation in school life are additional avenues for parents to engage in their children's educations and demonstrate to their children that school matters and education is important.

**B.1.4 Educational Focus: Describe any areas of concentration (e.g., mathematics, science, the arts); student needs (e.g., early childhood, students with disabilities, gifted and talented, bilingual/multicultural); nontraditional instructional groupings; or themes (e.g., technology, sports and health, international studies) on which this school intends to focus.**

Our school's focus will be on establishing a culture of learning for teachers and students. This focus will promote educational innovation to improve students' learning outcomes and promote teachers' development as professionals. Our teachers will be encouraged to translate theory into practice. Teachers will become expert guides in the inquiry process because they too will be engaged in inquiry at a professional level. Through mentoring relationships and professional collaboration with administrative support, teachers will be encouraged to bring the best ideas out of research into their classrooms.

MMPCS will build a culture which will encourage each student to be an ambitious learner. Research and practice will be focused on improving every student's outcomes. These outcomes include students' performance on standardized assessments, students' intellectual dispositions

## B. Education Plan

such as their on-going curiosity about their world, their sense of self-efficacy not as “students” but as learners and their willingness to innovate and employ new approaches in school and beyond.

### **B.2 Academic Design**

**B.2.1 Student Content and Performance Standards: Describe the educational foundation of the proposed school. Include in this description a thorough discussion of the instructional methods to be used. Explain the research that demonstrates that this approach will work with your anticipated student population. Describe the culture or ethos that will be developed in the school.**

**Describe student content and performance standards, including both academic and nonacademic areas of the curriculum and how these standards will serve the identified student population. If student content and performance standards have not been completely developed, provide a description of the process and timeline for developing a comprehensive statement of such standards for all students. Approval of a charter school application without completed academic standards will be conditional until these standards are submitted and approved.**

MMPCS’ Educational Program is based on a Reggio Emilia-inspired project approach. Reggio Emilia is a well-described constructivist approach which is predicated on the belief that children are "protagonists" that is, they are active, motivated and capable participants in the learning process. (Edwards, 1998)

This approach is open and evolving. Educators are viewed as researchers and experts in their students’ learning. This approach promotes innovation by encouraging teachers to incorporate research and theory into their teaching practice. Rather than a prescribed method, this approach is a philosophy to guide educators’ decision-making and to promote innovation in teaching practice.

## B. Education Plan

In this approach, students use their prior skills and knowledge to plan and conduct research on questions of interest to them. In the process of their research students document their work and engage in self-assessment through varied arts media. Arts integration becomes an important means of constructing new knowledge and exploring new paths to solving problems.

MMPCS' project approach will bring learning to life by viewing each student as an important contributor and capable learner, building both essential academic knowledge and intellectual dispositions through collaborative work, disciplined inquiry, meaningful self-assessment and promoting the value of learning beyond school.

MMPCS' project approach will be structured on Newman's model of Authentic Intellectual Work or "authentic learning". Authentic learning requires students to apply essential knowledge in novel ways. In this process, students construct knowledge by organizing, evaluating and synthesizing information in new ways. The construction of knowledge is guided by disciplined inquiry based on prior knowledge, in-depth understanding and complex communication to conduct research and present conclusions. Finally, authentic intellectual work must have value beyond school as demonstrated by its impact on others rather than viewing test scores as the final outcome. (Newman, 2001)

These three criteria of authentic intellectual work will guide instructional practice in the MMPCS project approach. Student *activity* does not always indicate student engagement in intellectual work. Indeed, enthusiastic and active students can often produce work that is of low intellectual quality with little personal relevance. Therefore, these standards will be employed as indicators of students' higher-order intellectual engagement.

In the project approach, activities are embedded with skills and knowledge. According to Dewey's philosophy of education, active engagement and relevance are hallmarks of intellectual engagement which is essential for effective learning. Students remember skills which were learned in relevant contexts. (Dewey, 1916) They also develop greater understanding of concepts and new levels of skill mastery when engaged in inquiry, novel application of knowledge and self-evaluation.

## B. Education Plan

In this approach learning does not occur in isolation, just as in the adult world work is purposeful and occurs in a social context. In the MMPCS project approach, learning experiences are interconnected, purposeful and promote development of the skillful application of knowledge across content areas.

### Research Base

#### Project Approach

The project learning approach is increasingly recognized as a pedagogical model which can improve educational outcomes for more students. The National Science Teacher Association (NSTA) Best-practices in Science Education include inquiry learning, constructivist approaches and cooperative learning practices.

The National Council on the Teaching of English Eastern Michigan Writing Project's "Qualities of Best Practice in Teaching Writing" enumerates elements for language arts education which include:

- students writing with purpose
- grammar and mechanics learned in the context of actual writing
- sharing work with real audiences
- classroom context of shared learning
- writing extended throughout the curriculum

The National Council on Social Studies Elementary Education Position Statement identifies project learning and student inquiry as a means of making learning "meaningful and powerful" as well as means to integrate learning concepts across the curriculum. (National Council on Social Studies, 2008)

Research has shown that students in project learning approaches demonstrate higher scores on measures of critical thinking and confidence. (Shepard, 1998) Benefits of this approach also

## B. Education Plan

include improvements in:

- students' ability to define problems (Gallagher, Stepien, & Rosenthal, 1992),
- crafting strongly reasoned arguments (Stepien, Gallagher, & Workman, 1993)
- project planning (Moore, Sherwood, Bateman, Bransford, & Goldman, 1996)
- motivation for both teachers and students, (Bartscher, Gould, & Nutter, 1995)
- attitudes toward learning (Bartscher, Gould, & Nutter, 1995)
- work habits, critical-thinking and problem-solving skills (Bartscher, Gould, & Nutter, 1995)

Diffly and Sassman's description of the project approach describes the benefits afforded to students:

- schoolwork becomes more relevant to work outside the classroom
- improved development of skills which have been acquired in relevant contexts
- integration of skills across curricular domains
- skills and knowledge are embedded in a trans-disciplinary process of inquiry including literacy, written expression, scientific and mathematical thinking
- greater student involvement in learning than teacher-driven approaches. (Diffly & Sassman, 2002)

In addition, STEM education is viewed as most successful when integrated into a comprehensive curriculum such as a project approach to learning. The Teaching Institute for Excellence in STEM (TIES) proposes that effective STEM education should include these attributes:

- opportunities for students "to take charge of their own learning" (Foucault, 1975 in Morrison)
- opportunities for investigation and analysis of scientific questions
- opportunities for student innovation and inventiveness in all areas
- active and student-centered learning
- school culture which promotes questioning, creativity and consideration of

## B. Education Plan

possibilities

- academic rigor
- trans-disciplinary approach to learning
- support for spontaneous questioning as well as planned investigation
- curricula and instruction serve students with a variety of learning styles and disabilities
- constructivist-based professional development

Students who have struggled in conventional didactic models demonstrate improved academic success in active learning curriculums. Researchers suggest these improved student outcomes in a project approach may result from opportunities to use different skills that are better suited to these students' unique learning styles. (Boaler, 1997; Meyer, Turner, & Spencer, 1997; Rosenfeld & Rosenfeld, 1998).

On standardized tests, mixed-skills groupings of students learning in a project approach performed as well as a high-skills group from a conventional school. In addition, the mixed-skills project group out-performed the high-skills conventional group in problem-solving tasks. Research also shows that the gender gap in math mastery was absent in the project approach student sample. (Boaler, 1998)

Longitudinal studies have shown that students who have engaged in "self-initiated" learning early in their educations demonstrate improved educational outcomes which carry over through transitions from grade to grade. (Marcon, 1995; Marcon, 2002) and outperform their in-district and national peers in math and reading at most grade levels. (Atwater, 1991)

Research has shown that students who engage in "authentic learning" characterized by complex tasks and the construction of knowledge demonstrate improved educational outcomes regardless of race, gender or prior achievement. (Newmann, Marks, & Gamoran, 1995)

There is a strong body of research that indicates the authentic learning inherent in a skillfully

## B. Education Plan

employed project approach results in improved outcomes on a variety of measures for a broad range of students. The MMPCS project learning approach incorporates the best-practice recommendations of national teachers' councils and researchers whose work indicates that a constructivist approach to project inquiry supports the development of skills and intellectual dispositions viewed as essential for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### Collaboration

In the project approach to inquiry, collaboration is an essential element of the learning process. Students and teachers collaborate at all levels in the process of discovering answers to project questions. Teachers collaborate as researchers and careful observers of students in order to refine their practice of teaching to support students in the process of inquiry. Students collaborate with one another and with teachers to generate questions and find answers on matters of interest to them. (Edwards, 1998; Katz, 1989)

Research suggests that student collaboration inherent in a project learning approach results in improved learning outcomes. (Quin, Johnson, & Johnson 1995; Johnson & Johnson, 1981, 1989; Barron, 2000a, b; 2003; O'Donnell & Dansereau, 1992)

Researchers suggest that collaborative academic engagement promotes improved student performance by providing opportunities to:

- articulate one's unique perspective on a problem (King, 1990; Webb, Troper, & Fall, 1995)
- engage in productive discussion to resolve differences in perspective (Amigues, 1988; Phelps & Damon, 1989)
- observe other's strategies (Azmitia, 1988)
- listen to explanations (Coleman, 1998; Hatano & Iganaki, 1991; Webb, 1985; Schwartz, 1995; Shirouzu, Miyake, & Masukawa, 2002).

The benefits of collaborative efforts extend to social skills and behavior management as well. Kindergarteners participating in a constructivist approach based on child-initiated activities

## B. Education Plan

demonstrated stronger interpersonal skills including a wider variety of negotiation strategies. (Devries, Reese-Learned & Morgan 1991)

In collaborative instructional settings, student improvements have been demonstrated in self-concept, interaction skills, time on task, and positive regard for peers. (Cohen et al., 1982; Cook et al., 1985; Ginsburg-Block, Rohrbeck, & Fantuzzo, 2006).

In addition, Science for all Americans, Project 2061 recommends that schools should prepare students for the collaborative work necessary for advanced scientific inquiry (American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1989). In a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy, these skills will be come increasingly critical for long-term success.

### Arts Integration

In MMPCS' project approach, arts integration is employed as a means of promoting authentic learning experiences. Recent instructional trends focused on satisfying ever-increasing standardized testing demands have imposed limits on both teachers' and students' exercise of creativity in learning. These pedagogical methods can limit the effectiveness of instruction for students whose learning styles and strengths are in areas other than highly verbal, mathematical or spatial thinking. (Gardner, 1993; Russell-Bowie, 2009)

Newmann proposes that exploring varied means of expression is an important pedagogical principle of authentic intellectual work. Opportunities to explore ideas in a variety of ways promote students' abilities to construct knowledge in the learning process. (Newmann, 1991)

Recent research suggests that arts integration supports and improves student performance in math and reading, particularly for minority and at-risk students, increases opportunities for authentic learning experiences and improves students' attitudes toward learning and achievement in higher education (McCarty, 2009; Anderson & Lawrence, 2001; Brasler, 2009; Free, 2004; Caulfield, Kidd, & Kocher, 2000; Heath 2001).

## B. Education Plan

National Education Longitudinal Study data suggests a correlation between arts programming and academic testing, attendance, graduation rates and improved discipline (Department of Education, 1994). Studies of emergent readers suggest that arts education supports the development of discrete visual perceptual skills and improved comprehension. (Richards, 2003; Free, 2004)

In addition to this body of research, MMPCS' academic programming will be richly embedded with arts because participation in the arts is an opportunity to engage with essential elements of the human experience.

“The arts are a fundamentally important part of culture, and an education without them is an impoverished education leading to an impoverished society. Studying the arts should not have to be justified in terms of anything else. The arts are as important as the sciences: they are time-honored ways of learning, knowing and expressing.” (Hetland & Winner, 2001, p5)

At MMPCS, arts will be an essential means of exploring ideas and enhancing understanding of topics. In the MMPCS project approach to learning, visual arts will be an important means of self-evaluation and meaning-making in the inquiry process. Students will participate in arts as part of their core subject areas. Through our arts integration approach, the art teacher will “push in” to the classroom to enhance authentic learning experiences across the curriculum. In project work, students document their work through varied media. Documentation is used as a means of recording and assessing student inquiry in project learning. Documentation through arts media enhances students' construction of knowledge, self-assessment and provides alternate experiences with concepts allowing new insights to emerge.

Rich arts programming will also be an avenue of carrying out MMPCS' mission of preparing students to participate in their communities. Allegany County has been at the heart of Western Maryland's cultural renaissance which has been led by artists living and working in our

## B. Education Plan

communities. These artists are not only visionaries with talent and technical skills; they are also entrepreneurs. Our founding group envisions strong partnerships with our local arts community. This partnership will be another avenue for the pursuit of authentic learning and real-world applications of useful academic skills. It will also offer our students the opportunity to engage deeply with the community leaders and people whose vision often shapes the way we see the world.

### STEM Integration

At MMPCS STEM education will be integrated into project learning. MMPCS' project approach promotes the habits of inquiry characteristic of education in STEM disciplines. Students generate questions, conduct research to discover answers and are given the space, time and encouragement to persist in their search for answers.

The math and science curricula at MMPCS support students' acquisition of essential intellectual tools as the basis for inquiry. In project learning, students apply these tools to solve problems and answer questions that are of interest to them. STEM learning will be integrated into project planning and research. In their concluding projects, students will learn the habits and skills of distilling key ideas and conclusions from their data and then communicating their findings with a real audience.

### School Culture & Ethos

MMPCS' culture will encourage students to take ownership of and participate actively in the learning process. MMPCS' culture will value each student's person, abilities and contribution to the learning process. MMPCS faculty, staff and volunteers will build this culture by creating a milieu which communicates to students that they have come to school to do important work and that each person's contribution is important.

MMPCS will create an environment which values listening and respect for each individual. MMPCS' academic approach relies on individuals' abilities to ask questions, offer ideas and work collaboratively. These skills require that each person be afforded the opportunity to

## B. Education Plan

express himself appropriately and learn to listen as others do the same.

MMPCS culture will foster innovation in teaching and learning by encouraging students and teachers to take intellectual risks and providing them the space to learn from the outcomes. MMPCS' school culture will promote reflective practice in teaching and learning through collaboration in a respectful and honest environment. MMPCS' school culture will support the mentoring relationships in which professionals can improve their teaching craft and students feel safe to ask unorthodox questions and push beyond conventional expectations of students.

MMPCS will establish a culture in which all opinions can be heard and the community is welcome in school life. MMPCS will do this through a governance structure that encourages student, family, teacher and community involvement in the life of the school.

MMPCS' culture will celebrate our local culture. MMPCS' culture will foster a pride of place that transcends traditional allegiances, ethnic or racial divides and promotes a sense of dignity, tradition and optimism toward the future in the school community.

### Student Content and Performance Standards

MMPCS will use the National Common Core Standards for Language Arts and Math. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) formally adopted the National Common Core Standards in 2010 to replace the Maryland Core Curriculum Standards. MMPCS will use the Maryland Core Curriculum Standards as a framework to guide instruction in the remaining content areas. MMPCS' academic programming will use project work as an integrating element across the curriculum in order to balance students' active participation and ownership of learning with the academic skills required to meet their learning objectives and project goals.

The main content and standards strands to be explored at MMPCS in grades K-8 include:

- Math - Counting and Cardinality, Operations and Algebraic Thinking, Numbers and Operations in Base Ten, Geometry, Measurement and Data, Ratios and Proportional Relations, The Number System, Expressions and Equations,

## B. Education Plan

Statistics and Probability, Functions

- Reading/Language Arts - Reading Literature and Informational Texts, Reading Foundational Skills, Writing, Language, Speaking and Listening, Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects
- Science – Scientific Skills and Processes, Earth/Space, Life, Chemistry, Physics, Environment
- Social Studies – Peoples of the Nation and World, Geography, Economics, History, Social Studies Skills and Processes
- Visual Arts – Perceiving and Responding: Aesthetic Education, Historical, Cultural and Social Context, Creative Expression and Production, Aesthetics and Criticism
- Maryland Technology Literacy Standards for Students – Technology Systems, Digital Citizenship, Technology for Learning and Collaboration, Technology for Communication and Expression, Technology for Information Use and Management, Technology for Problem-Solving and Decision-Making
- Physical Education – Skillfulness, Biomechanical Principles, Motor Learning Principles, Exercise Physiology, Physical Activity, Social Psychological Principles

**B.2.2 Curriculum: Provide a general description of the curriculum that will be used by the school, including the objectives, content, and skills to be taught in the main subject areas at each grade level in the school. Indicate how the curriculum is aligned with the standards in the Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum and/or the school's additional standards, as well as how students with special needs, gifted and talented students, and students who enter the school below grade level will be engaged in and benefit from the curriculum. If the school intends to use the district's curriculum it will not have to demonstrate alignment with the Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum, but will need to describe its unique additions and/or applications of the curriculum. If the school will have a particular curriculum focus (e.g., mathematics and science, the arts, the humanities, career**

## B. Education Plan

**exploration), explain how the focus will be integrated across all curriculum areas. Discuss how the curriculum is consistent with the mission and philosophy of the school, as well as the planned assessment tools, and will lead to the accomplishment of the school's goals, in particular, how the curriculum will lead to high achievement for all students.**

### Everyday Mathematics

Everyday Math is a research-based K-6 curriculum which focuses on mathematical thinking rather than computation. This curriculum employs distributed practice as a means of repeated exposure to concepts and practice opportunities for mastery. Everyday Mathematics is compatible with a constructivist project approach to learning in that it incorporates the social context of learning. In this context, students' proximal zones of development are expanded through the process of collaboration and peer interaction related to exploration of content.

Everyday Math is designed to meet the needs of all students by promoting varied approaches to problem solving. This method allows students to choose among algorithms to solve problems. Students develop a repertoire of computational skills and learn to evaluate their skills in the context of problem solving to determine which method will be most effective in solving problems.

Everyday Math instruction identifies "focus algorithms" which are to be mastered over time and with repeated exposure and practice. The focus algorithm instructional practice is designed to give additional support to those students who struggle to develop effective strategies on their own. The focus strategy allows every student to have at least one "go to" strategy for problem solving but does not preclude the flexibility of choosing among strategies for those who are able.

The Everyday Math curriculum is designed to incorporate students' prior knowledge by creating space for students to initially use strategies which make sense to them rather than rigid and uniform algorithms. These practices allow students to develop an intuitive sense of mathematical functions, a broader array of computational skills, improved mental math skills, greater flexibility in transitions between learning tools such as manipulatives, words and

## B. Education Plan

pictures. The use of “invented strategies” can improve students’ understanding of math because what is understandable is more relevant to students’ experiences.

In the authentic learning of the project approach, the focus is not on arriving at the “right” answer. The focus is on the process of developing intellectual dispositions of inquiry, learning to ask meaningful questions and conducting research related to them. Everyday Math is a curriculum that supports the development of these dispositions because it fosters mathematical thinking and the mathematical skills necessary to approach problems using a range of math tools and skills necessary to interpret research results. Although basic arithmetical and computational skills are essential for every mathematician, they cannot be the end point. Everyday Math helps students develop the skills and the habits of thought to use math to solve real-world problems.

Everyday Math is congruent with our project approach in that learning activities are designed to occur in settings which are accepting and supportive, allow for experimentation, embed computational tasks in real-life contexts and allow for students’ collaborative self-assessment of their solution strategies.

Everyday Math aligns with the National Common Core Standards for Math. At each grade level of Everyday Math, students are working on the skills outlined in the National Common Core Standards including Counting and Cardinality, Operations and Algebraic Thinking, Numbers and Operations in Base Ten, Number and Operations – Fractions, Geometry, Measurement and Data, Ratios and Proportional Relations, The Number System, Expressions and Equations, Functions and Statistics and Probability,

### Transition Math

Transition Math is a middle-school math curriculum developed by the University of Chicago School Math Project (UCSMP). The curriculum builds on the skills and learning experiences in Everyday Math. Transition Math is aligned with the math standards established by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM). Transition Math is designed to address three core

## B. Education Plan

issues in math education as identified by the college board, Project Achieve and the American Statistical Association. These issues are:

- Students should learn more math before leaving school.
- Math curricula must keep pace with changes in math and its applications.
- Many students opt out or are sorted out of math education opportunities which would prepare them for employment and advanced education.

Transition Math is designed to incorporate problem solving and the application of math skills across disciplines. UCSMP post-testing indicates that Transition Math students perform as well as non-Transition Math students in all areas and out-perform them in geometry and applications of algebra.

Teacher reports suggest that while Transition Math prepares students well for high stakes testing, the curriculum covers topics beyond the scope of most tests. Teachers also report that more students are able to be successful in Transition Math and students learn more math. Teachers tend to use more small groups and cooperative learning strategies and to assign and discuss math related reading.

Transition Math has been selected as a middle school math curriculum because it builds upon students' success in math in the K-6 Everyday Math curriculum and allows them opportunities to work as mathematicians by applying math skills in solving relevant problems. UCSMP research suggests that students with a broad range of abilities are successful in this math curriculum. Transition Math will allow MMPCS' educators to help struggling students to succeed and to help successful students go as far as their visions can take them.

Transition Math aligns with the National Common Core Standards for Math. In Transition Math, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students are working on the skills outlined in the National Common Core Standards. Standards strands addressed in Transition Math include Ratios and Proportional Relationships, The Number System, Expression and Equations, Geometry, Functions and Statistics and Probability.

## B. Education Plan

### Full Option Science System (FOSS)

FOSS is a research-based science curriculum that promotes the intellectual disposition of scientific thinking through active investigation using laboratory materials, scientific reading and writing, math skills and communication skills. Students work with lab equipment, tools and sample materials to investigate scientific principles, generate and test hypotheses and communicate their results. FOSS learning modules promote students' active engagement in answering questions and solving problems. In each module, students have opportunities to explore materials and develop the skills required of scientists such as observing, hypothesizing, recording and analyzing data and communicating results.

FOSS promotes students' engagement in the process of scientific inquiry rather than their focus on the right answer. In learning modules, students work collaboratively to identify and solve problems through repeated trials and varied approaches. In FOSS, "students learn science by doing science" (FOSS program description). The FOSS curriculum provides opportunities for students to apply their skills across core content areas, construct knowledge and apply it in novel ways.

Engagement in FOSS modules promotes not only students' understanding of scientific principles and their applications but also the discipline and perseverance required in rigorous scientific inquiry and students' view of themselves as competent and capable scientific thinkers.

Because it is designed to incorporate students' construction of knowledge, collaboration in scientific inquiry and integration of other core content areas, the FOSS curriculum will support students' development of scientific knowledge and habits of thought that are essential for engagement in MMPCS' project approach to learning.

FOSS aligns with the Maryland Core Curriculum Standards for science. Maryland Core Curriculum Standards strands addressed in include Skills and Processes, Earth/Space, Life, Chemistry, Physics and Environment. With its emphasis on scientific communication, FOSS is

## B. Education Plan

also aligned with the National Common Core Standards for Reading Informational Text and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects.

### Fountas and Pinnell Guided Reading

Guided Reading is a research-based reading program wherein each student has the opportunity to learn reading skills in small groups. Guided reading groups work from leveled readers selected to provide the appropriate challenge for each group. Students are encouraged to use their existing strategies of decoding and context clues as they integrate newly introduced skills into their reading repertoire. Guided Reading will be used as the primary language arts curriculum for grades K-6.

Guided reading is congruent with MMPCS' academic design because the program focuses on promoting students' deep understanding of written language. Students' interests and abilities are essential elements in the selection of leveled readers. In groups at all levels, teachers focus on supporting the development of skills which are essential in the inquiry process: searching for and using information, self-monitoring and correcting, predicting, making connections and other higher-order thinking skills.

Guided Reading offers opportunities within lessons for students to discuss readings with peers and respond to texts in writing.

Guided Reading addresses the National Common Core Standards of Reading Literature and Informational Texts, Reading Foundational Skills, Writing, Speaking and Listening and Language and the Career and College Readiness Anchor Standards. The K-5 standard strands which are addressed through the Guided Reading curriculum include Print Concepts, Phonological Awareness, Phonics and Word Recognition and Fluency.

### Great Books

Great Books will be integrated into MMPCS' K-6 language arts program as a complementary program which will provide expanded opportunities for all students to explore literature and

## B. Education Plan

engage intellectually with texts regardless of their reading level. Great Books will be used as the core language arts curriculum in grades 7 and 8.

Great Books programs are designed to promote the intellectual dispositions necessary for students to become readers, deep thinkers and independent learners. This program assumes that students at every reading level can engage deeply with great literature and by engaging all aspects of an individual (imagination, intellect and emotion) great literature becomes accessible to all students.

Great Books programs use the “Shared Inquiry” method which encourages students to search for answers which have emerged from literary texts. The process of Shared Inquiry is based on a special relationship between the group and the leader who guides participants to find their own interpretations of and answers from literature. The Shared Inquiry process is characterized by participants’ listening deeply to one another, offering respectful opinions and evaluating positions based on their merits. Through this process students learn to organize their own thoughts, generate, test and revise hypotheses when given new information and to communicate their own complex ideas constructively.

Great Books is congruent with the MMPCS project approach because it supports students’ construction of knowledge and collaborative communication skills through the exploration of real literary texts. Great Books will be an important tool at all grade levels to support students’ development of the critical thinking and communication skills necessary for successful engagement in project inquiry.

Both Guided Reading and Great Books align with the National Common Core Standards for Language Arts. The 6-8 Standards addressed through the MMPCS Language Arts curriculum include the National Common Core Anchor Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening and Language.

## B. Education Plan

MMPCS' academic program is designed to be a language-rich environment in which reading and writing are incorporated into the foundation of students' project research, analysis and presentations. The National Common Core Standards strands in Writing for K-8 to be addressed include Text Types and Purposes, Production and Distribution of Writing, Research to Build and Present Knowledge and Range of Writing.

### Emergent Curriculum

At MMPCS, the emergent curriculum provides opportunities for real-life problem-solving and student responsibility for learning. This curriculum emerges from teachers' observations of students' conversations, activities, interests and questions which are then developed and explored through project inquiry.

Emergent curriculum theory recognizes that “[a]nything creative, such as emergent curriculum, cannot be reduced to a formula or set pattern” (Wien, 2008, p. 144) and requires that participants remain open to the possibilities that develop. The emergent curriculum “permits an organic close to activities” (Wein, 2008, p. 147) to allow unhurried learning and deep engagement.

The emergent curriculum will be an essential tool in students' construction of knowledge. Throughout the project inquiry process, students have opportunities for practice, repetition, self-assessment, collaboration and exploration of questions that are meaningful to them.

Because “much learning is layered and tacit” (Wein, 2008, p.158), many academic standards can be met through the emergent curriculum. Language arts, science and math will be richly woven into the work required for project inquiry and the sharing of findings. Through the use of standards maps in the project planning process, the National Common Core Standards and the Maryland Core Curriculum Standards will serve as frameworks for guiding students' learning through project inquiry.

### STEM Curriculum

## B. Education Plan

In keeping with TIES' (Teaching Institute for Excellence in STEM) recommendations, MMPCS will integrate scientific and mathematical inquiry into the project learning process. FOSS and Everyday Math will serve as the foundation of students' academic skills in conducting research and solving problems to scientific questions which students find meaningful. Students will learn scientific principles, mathematical algorithms and their applications in the design and research of topics of project learning. The integration of STEM learning in a trans-disciplinary manner will allow students to develop a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness and relevance of science and math to the human experience and culture, spur students' curiosity about and skills for scientific inquiry and build students' perceptions of themselves as competent and capable scientists and researchers.

**B.2.3 Methods of Instruction: Describe the instructional methods to be used, including any distinctive instructional techniques or approaches to be employed, such as cooperative learning or uses of technology. Discuss how the pedagogies will provide students with the knowledge, proficiency, and skills needed to perform at high levels and how these pedagogues will help produce the educational outcomes anticipated in the goals.**

### Teacher's Role:

Experts in employing the project approach know that student mastery of basic skills are essential for engagement in authentic learning. (Newmann, 1991) and must be balanced with their engagement in authentic learning (Russell-Bowie, 2009, Katz & Chard, 1989).

To support student achievement, Newmann proposes "standards of intellectual quality" (Newmann, 1991) as benchmarks for educators. These benchmarks include construction, rather than repetition of knowledge, disciplined inquiry and the value of learning beyond school.

In order to achieve these intellectual standards and promote the intellectual dispositions of inquiry and research, Newman proposes the following principles of pedagogy:

- students' prior knowledge as foundation of learning (teacher as researcher)
- students as "complex thinkers" striving to make meaning (student as protagonist)

## B. Education Plan

- processing information via conversation, writing and other forms of expression (collaboration, self-assessment and documentation)
- teacher as facilitator, model, guide
- high levels of collaboration among teachers and students
- high expectations (Newmann, 1991)

In the project approach at MMPCS, teachers will help students make connections across content areas for deeper learning. This process of learning by making meaning rests on two instructional pillars: project learning and academic skill development bound together by the standards of authentic intellectual work.

### Project Learning:

In educational literature and practice, there are numerous descriptions of “project”. The following definitions outline the characteristics of “projects” MMPCS’ project learning approach.

Thomas’ description of project learning defines five key elements of the approach:

- projects are core elements of the curriculum
- students drive questioning that leads to the discovery of important concepts and principles
- investigations involve inquiry and knowledge building,
- students take responsibility for planning and work management,
- investigations center on real-world problems of relevance to the investigators (Thomas, 2000)

Katz defines projects as in-depth research focused on answering questions on a topic raised by students, teachers or both. Research efforts related to projects can be undertaken by a whole class, small groups or individual students. Projects are conducted with a specific purpose of

## B. Education Plan

developing a presentation for a specific audience such as parents, fellow students or community members. (Katz, 1994)

MMPCS' project approach draws on both Thomas' and Katz's definitions. Projects will be used to integrate all elements of the curriculum. Teachers and students will play a role in decision-making about the topics they will research. Teachers will serve as facilitators, models and guides for the collaborative and disciplined inquiry required for research. Students' research will be shared with a real and specific audience at the conclusion of the project.

Every project is comprised of three phases:

Phase I – Project Planning

Phase II – Investigation

Phase III – Concluding Presentation

### Phase I – Project Planning

In the project approach, teachers guide the planning process. Teachers observe, assess and listen to students to identify topics which are of interest to students or topics which will promote needed skill development. Teachers observe students' conversations, activities, play and skill development. From these observations, teachers identify areas of interest to students through which learning standards can be achieved.

Teachers then evaluate the topic to determine if it is a feasible means of addressing student goals. Graphic organizers and standards maps may be used to evaluate a project idea's potential in supporting student achievement toward learning standards. Teachers also collaborate with one another to expand the topic, evaluate the goodness of fit between topic material and student needs and outline learning goals for the project. These analyses are the basis for evaluating the viability of the project.

Further exploration of the potential project topic is then pursued through whole class discussion with the teacher's guidance. Graphic organizers such as KWL charts and knowledge webs are

## B. Education Plan

developed during whole class discussions to explore the potential project topic. Teachers assess students' prior knowledge and facilitate the generation of questions that will guide planning. Teachers employ books, photos, video presentation, documentation activities, site visits and graphic organizers in assessing and managing student knowledge and skills related to the topic.

With a viable project topic established, teachers then work with students to develop and plan the project activities. Planning includes activities involved in research, documentation and the concluding presentation.

In the planning process, the teacher will model and coach students in the use of appropriate communication and social skills such as listening, voting and expressing differing opinions respectfully. In the course of the project, student consensus may lead to a decision to pursue a course of action that is not feasible or advisable. In this situation, teachers will have opportunities to model negotiation strategies and help students arrive at a compromise which is realistic and satisfactory to all parties.

The most important practice method in the project planning phase is teachers' use of their assessment skills. Teachers must employ their expert knowledge of students' abilities in crafting a just right challenge with achievable yet challenging goals through research activities. Teachers' skills in assessing each student's appropriate level of challenge will be essential to supporting successful achievement of standards and project objectives.

Assessment tools may include teacher observations, checklists, formative assessments, rubrics and student self-assessments. These assessments will allow teachers to align project inquiry goals with learning standards and support student achievement through the differentiation of instruction specific to each student.

In the planning phase, teachers' skills as facilitators emerge with the use of suggestive rather than directive strategies. These strategies include: listening to students' experiences and questions on a topic, offering "pondering and wondering" (Katz, p.78) statements to suggest

## B. Education Plan

ideas for project activities and resources rather than directing students.

Through the facilitative guidance tools of modeling, pondering and wondering teachers will demonstrate their expectation that students are capable of making their own decisions. Teachers employ themselves as resources to support each student's engagement in learning and achievement. Through the process of active engagement with teacher facilitation students develop a sense of competence, independence and ownership of their learning. Through these methods teachers will be educators who help students ask good questions and become confident enough to discover their own answers.

### Phase II – Investigation

In Phase II, project activities have been outlined and students work as a class, in cooperative learning groups or at times individually to accomplish project goals set in the planning process.

During project investigation, students work as researchers, reflective learners and collaborative team workers who are able to identify and employ the resources which can help them discover answers to their questions.

While engaged in authentic learning, students will often work with rubrics to guide their work. Rubrics will serve as a guide to students' self-assessment during research. Guidance from rubrics will provide clear standards of disciplined inquiry for students to meet. Students then have the opportunity to adjust their research focus and project plans accordingly. This process increases each student's sense of responsibility for learning and his sense of himself as an important contributor in the inquiry process. Students' will also develop their own rubrics to enhance their engagement in disciplined inquiry.

Rubrics can also serve to help students who are "stuck" or moving in a tangential direction with minimal relevance to their learning objectives to reset their course and re-focus their research activities.

## B. Education Plan

Investigation activities often fall into “Active Strategies” such as: questioning, estimating, hypothesizing, experimenting, exploring and manipulating objects”; or “Receptive Strategies” such as “observing, listening, reading, looking at pictures, watching experiments, feeling objects, examining and observing events and items related to the project.” (Katz & Chard, 1989, p 69)

Field Trips are often an important part of conducting research in the project approach. Students and teachers often plan field research in the community in order to observe and interview people with expertise related to the topic under research. Field research budgets will be modest, with small fees for students. No student will be excluded from field research based on an inability to pay a related fee.

### Documentation

Documentation is a critical component of the inquiry process. Documentation can include sketches, dramatic exploration, photos and videos of site-visits, journal entries, graphic representation of data and many other products which help students evaluate their learning throughout the project. At MMPCS visual arts will be integrated into project work through a “push-in” model of arts exploration. The visual arts teacher will work in a co-teaching model with classroom teachers to help students explore ideas, reflect on and develop their own understanding, document their work and develop artifacts for concluding projects.

The varied media used in the documentation process offer students a concrete form of reflection on topics where they might not yet have the sophisticated language and refined cognitive skills for effective self-assessment in only one acceptable format, such as a reflective essay. The use of varied media supports the self-reflection and meta-cognitive process necessary for students to gain new insights and understanding.

Through documentation development and review, students learn to evaluate their own knowledge and understanding, develop new perspectives and understanding regarding a problem and identify new skills needed to solve problems.

## B. Education Plan

### Collaboration

In the MMPCS project approach, students must develop specific collaborative skills to engage in project research and inquiry. From the earliest grades, our teachers will promote the development of these skills by modeling and encouraging communication and collaborative behaviors which lend themselves to successful student collaboration.

In collaborative student work such as cooperative learning, the goal is for student learning outcomes to be greater than the sum of their parts. Through cooperative learning, students develop communication, decision-making and conflict resolution skills. Student collaboration also provides opportunities for engagement in high-level thinking, generation of new ideas and creative problem solving. (Johnson & Johnson, 1999)

Newmann & Wehlage (1993) outline three essential features of collaboration essential for authentic learning:

- interaction related to topics and ideas
- unscripted and spontaneous exchanges in sharing ideas
- dialog that builds on participants' ideas to promote collective understanding of the topic

In the cooperative learning format, the teacher needs to clearly establish expectations regarding how students are to function. These expectations will be rooted in the school's culture. These expectations will include: students' view of one another as major resources, the teacher's availability for guidance as necessary, students' free use of any materials at their disposal to accomplish their jobs (Johnson & Johnson, 1975).

In general, cooperative learning groups should be mixed ability groupings. This method is congruent with the school philosophy of honoring all students' abilities. This will enable students of all abilities to develop a broader repertoire of communication and collaboration skills in group work. Interest grouping will often allow for mixed ability grouping and support high levels of student motivation and engagement in tasks. Groups may also consist of students who

## B. Education Plan

require additional support in a specific skill in order to offer targeted student-centered support and close monitoring by teachers.

Teachers will monitor groups and as necessary suggest strategies to improve group members' participation with tools such as the "three card rule". Here each student is given three cards and surrenders one each time he makes a comment. When he runs out of cards, he must wait until all the other students have had opportunities to put down their three cards. All students can then pick three more cards. This is one strategy among many that teachers can use to facilitate balance in cooperative learning. Increased participation of all students in a group improves group outcomes and heightens the benefits afforded to each student through group work.

In order to support the norm of students as major resources in group work, teachers must direct students' search for support to other students. Teachers' cues should be non-specific and refer students to one another for resource identification: "Does anyone in your group have an idea?"

Because successful collaboration requires self-reflection, teachers will support students' awareness of their strengths and needs in collaborative work tasks. Strategies to support students' development of collaborative skills include:

- helping students to identify and define key skills necessary for engagement in learning activities
- helping students to identify models and mentors
- providing opportunities for practicing skills and providing immediate, specific and descriptive feedback on student performance
- incorporating skills into classroom norms (Johnson & Johnson, 1975)

### Phase III – Concluding Presentation

In the project approach, investigations are conducted with the purpose of sharing discoveries with a specific audience at the conclusion of the project. Teachers guide students in developing a plan for a concluding presentation, identifying the target audience and preparing the presentation. Concluding presentations can take many forms such as "publishing" a book or

## B. Education Plan

brochure, conducting a performance, creating a “museum” display or hosting a booth at the school or community fair.

In the process of developing this presentation, teachers guide students in considering the needs of their target audience, carefully choosing artifacts and materials to be shared and preparing the final product. The planning and preparation for the final presentation provides students the opportunity to communicate meaningfully with a real audience in various media. The presentation preparation also calls on students to synthesize the data and research they have discovered and organize it for presentation.

### Academic Skills:

At MMPCS, project learning will be made possible by students’ academic skill development. In the project approach, learning standards are measurably achieved through real-life, relevant project inquiry. Students are afforded opportunities to make connections among core subject areas rather than rehearsing academic skills in isolation. (Russell-Bowie, 2009)

In project learning, students apply the academic skills they have learned in content areas such as language arts, math and science. For example, in order to conduct fact-finding research, students’ reading comprehension must be sufficient for the task and well-matched to the materials they are reading in order to extract the required information. Similarly, students developing maps in a city planning project must be able to work with ratios and convert measurements in order to build their map to scale. A strong skill base in core content areas will provide a strong foundation for students’ inquiry learning.

MMPCS’ language arts, math and science curricula have been chosen for their congruence with a project approach and their inherent flexibility. These curricula will allow teachers to introduce a new skill that has been identified through student assessment as necessary for project goals and learning standards achievement. These curricula will also allow teachers the flexibility to provide student-centered instructional support to promote each student’s mastery of essential academic skills.

## B. Education Plan

### **B.2.4 Special Needs Students: Describe the school's approach to educating children with special needs, including those with exceptionally high needs and those with Limited English Proficiency (LEP).**

MMPCS will comply with all local, state and federal laws and regulations regarding the provision of a Free and Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment. MMPCS will be an inclusive learning environment in which every student's abilities are honored and every student is encouraged to reach his potential. Inclusion in the broadest sense will be woven into the MMPCS culture. Fostering inclusive beliefs and practices and providing strong instructional leadership will help teachers support every child's learning.

#### **B.2.4.a The process for identification and placement of students with disabilities, gifted and talented students, and LEP students, and the process for determining the assistance that these students may need. Who will make decisions about special education services? Who will be responsible for delivering special education and related services? How will services be provided (e.g., inclusion, pull-out services)? What special models of instruction, adaptations of classroom management, or service delivery strategies (if applicable) will be used to accommodate students with special needs?**

##### Identifying and Supporting Students' Learning Needs

On-going student assessments will be used to monitor student progress. Assessment tools will include screenings, criterion-referenced assessment tools, student work samples, teacher observation and checklists which will be administered throughout the school year to compare student progress to the standards benchmarks. This data will be used to guide instructional decisions. When assessment data indicates that a student is not making adequate progress, he will be referred by his teacher to the Student Support Team (SST) which will monitor and support his progress through a Response to Intervention (RTI) process. (See B.2.5 - Intensive Academic Support)

## B. Education Plan

Should the RTI process reveal that a student is able to participate successfully in his educational program with accommodations such as increased time for tasks or access to a computer for written work, the SST will collaborate with Allegany County Public Schools to develop a 504 Plan for the student.

Some students who receive RTI support may be recommended by the SST for an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services.

MMPCS will collaborate with Allegany County Public Schools in determining students' eligibility for and providing special education services including special education teachers and related services professionals. Decisions regarding student eligibility for special education services and IEP development will be made by the IEP team which will consist of the student's parents, classroom teacher, psychologist, related services professionals, the MMPCS Special Education Liaison, ACPS Special Education Facilitator, specialists at parent request and, as appropriate, the student. The IEP team will also determine IEP goals and service levels, models and service settings.

MMPCS will designate a faculty member with professional credentials as a Special Education Liaison to Allegany County Public Schools Special Education personnel. The Liaison will communicate with ACPS staff through all phases of the identification, referral, evaluation and service provision of Special Education services. The Special Education Liaison will work with ACPS Special Education Facilitators and the evaluation team to build effective relationships with the student and his family to promote positive parent involvement in the IEP development and implementation process.

The Special Education Liaison will also communicate with ACPS personnel regarding the identification, transition of and coordination of services for students currently receiving special education services who are planning to transfer to or from MMPCS.

## Inclusion

## B. Education Plan

MMPCS aims to be a learning community that honors all students' abilities and allows students to learn from one another in a variety of ways. To accomplish this, special education services will be provided using an inclusion model. Our educational model supports the use of co-teaching and inclusive instructional practices including mixed-ability grouping and authentic assessments which are often employed in documenting the progress of students with exceptional abilities. MMPCS teachers will collaborate with special educators and related services professionals to promote effective inclusive practices by embedding services into learning activities and generalizing effective strategies across the curriculum.

The MMPCS inclusion model provides opportunities for all students to benefit from instructional support. Flexible grouping provides opportunities for mixed skills grouping in which students with complementary skills learn from one another through modeling and peer guidance. Homogenous skill grouping will allow for highly differentiated instruction to address the needs of a group of students each of whom is struggling to master a specific skill or concept.

On-going student assessment and student-centered instructional differentiation procedures will also be followed for students referred to the SST as requiring TAG support. The project approach is a model that is often employed in TAG classrooms and will therefore lend itself well to meeting the exceptional learning needs of students classified as TAG.

**B.2.4.b The manner in which the school will meet the needs of LEP students including: Description of services for LEP students; How staff, curricular materials, and facilities will meet the needs of LEP students; Inclusion of LEP students in curricular and extracurricular activities; and Strategies for communicating with parents who are not proficient in English.**

On-going assessment will enable teachers to identify students whose academic achievement may be adversely affected by limited mastery of English. When a student is determined to be of LEP status, upon notification by the student's teacher, the Special Education Liaison will collaborate with ACPS to identify an ESOL educator. These services will be provided in a manner suitable

## B. Education Plan

to promote the student's on-going academic skill acquisition and improved English language skills.

MMPCS math, science and language arts curricula offer supplementary materials for students whose first language is not English. When a student is identified as LEP, these materials and other supplementary materials will be provided to support the student's engagement in all curricular activities.

The project approach is recommended as an educational model which is effective in promoting the inclusion of students of LEP status. Because learning activities incorporate artifacts and physical materials, teachers have opportunities to support students' acquisition of English language skills in a natural and meaningful context through labeling and expanding current vocabulary and grammatical knowledge with rich context and visual cues.

Communication with parents who do not speak English will occur with the use of contracted or volunteer interpreters. These interpreters will translate school notices, classroom newsletters and report cards to be sent home and during planned parent teacher conferences. Bilingual students will not be asked to translate for their non-English speaking parents during conferences or other official parent-teacher communication.

### **B.2.4.c The manner in which the school will meet the needs of Special Education**

**Students, including: Description of services for students with disabilities including the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE); Appropriate evaluation; Individualized Education Plan (IEP); Appropriate education in the least restrictive environment; Involvement in the development of and decisions regarding the IEP, along with their parents; and Procedures to resolve any disputes or disagreements related to the school or school district's provision of FAPE.**

MMPCS faculty will collaborate with ACPS Pupil Services to identify students eligible for Special Education services and to develop and implement IEPs and 504 Plans. As a public

## B. Education Plan

charter school, MMPCS will have no admissions testing or performance requirements. Every student enrolled will be entitled to a free and appropriate public education regardless of race, income or ability. Students with exceptional educational needs will be guaranteed a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment as mandated by federal law (IDEA).

MMPCS' inclusive practices will promote the participation of every student in the least restrictive environment and parental involvement in the IEP development and implementation process. At MMPCS, the IEP will be considered a fluid document which is driven by the student's needs. MMPCS' is committed to providing the resources necessary to allow IEP team members to respond to students' changing needs.

Parents will be informed of and aided in understanding their child's rights in the eligibility determination and IEP development process. Parents will be considered team members whose input is valued. Parents will be informed of their right to request an IEP team meeting to review student progress, review goals and modify services. Parents of children undergoing eligibility evaluations will be required to sign HIPPA-compliant releases and acknowledgments of their rights regarding mediation and resolution.

**B.2.4.d Provide assurances that the school will meet the needs of Exceptional Education students, including LEP students in accordance with federal law, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974, Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA), section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as applicable.**

The founding board of MMPCS has adopted a non-discrimination policy compliant with the regulations set forth in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974. In compliance with federal law, MMPCS' policy prohibits discrimination in employment or student assignment based on race, color, sex or national origin. In compliance with Title VI, students with limited English proficiency will neither be excluded from effective participation in MMPCS educational programs because of limited English

## B. Education Plan

proficiency nor will they be classified as special education students based solely on limited mastery of English.

MMPCS will comply with all federal, state and local regulations regarding the provision of a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment for all students as mandated by IDEA and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. MMPCS' academic design makes academic program services available to students with disabilities through an inclusion model of special education. MMPCS will make all mandatory accommodations and modifications stipulated in students' 504 Plans or Individual Education Plans in compliance with federal law.

MMPCS' proposed facility meets ADA accessibility codes in compliance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. MMPCS' proposed facility will allow students, parents and faculty with disabilities to participate in MMPCS programming on school grounds.

### **B.2.5 Strategies for Providing Intensive Academic Support: Describe the strategies for assisting students that enroll with reading and other basic skills that are substantially below grade level. Describe the plan for providing interventions to students who are not achieving the schools stated performance standards.**

MMPCS teachers will employ data-driven strategies to support students whose basic skills are below grade level or who are not achieving the schools stated performance goals. Teachers will conduct on-going assessment of each student's performance with regard to content standards. Through on-going assessment teachers will have a thorough picture of each student's progress.

When it is determined that a student is not progressing through a sequence of skills or demonstrating standards mastery, the teacher will present this student's progress, strengths and needs to the Student Support Team (SST). This team will consist of teachers, one of whom will chair the team, the principal and as appropriate, the student. This team will collaborate with the classroom teacher to modify and enhance instructional strategies to promote student outcomes at the Tier 1 level of intervention (See RTI model below). The team will follow up regarding the

## B. Education Plan

referred student's progress in 30 days from the original meeting date. If progress, as assessed by the SST has not been adequate, then, on the recommendation of the SST, the next phase of the Response to Intervention (RTI) protocol will be initiated.

A three tiered RTI model will be consist of:

Tier 1: classroom instruction

Tier 2: small group instruction three or four times weekly

Tier 3: one: one instruction

Data will be kept on the student's progress in each intervention tier. Assessment protocols will include discrete skill assessments, criterion referenced standardized assessment tools, student work and teacher observation and checklists as indicated. Data in each Tier will be reviewed by the SST in order to provide collaborative and classroom embedded teacher support, modify instructional methods or activities to improve student outcomes and make further recommendations.

Small group reading intervention for students who are below grade level will be addressed through the supplemental reading curriculum "Peer Assisted Learning Strategies" (PALS). PALS is a program developed by researchers at Vanderbilt University to build literacy skills through peer collaboration. The U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences reports that the PALS reading program resulted in measurable improvements in the areas of alphabets, fluency and comprehension. Students work in pairs and small groups to practice essential skills. Program research indicates that students whose skills range across ability levels, including children with learning disabilities show greater progress the PALS program than controls in conventional reading instruction. (Fuchs & Fuchs et al, 1997; Fuchs & Fuchs et al, 2002)

In this program, instructional levels are determined through curriculum-based assessment which provides data upon which teachers can set learning objectives for struggling readers and pair them with an appropriate peer partner. Research related to the PALS program also elaborates on

## B. Education Plan

balancing curriculum-based measurement with performance assessment to promote authentic learning experiences. (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1996)

In the PALS program, students work in pairs with teacher support. This allows teachers to customize reading interventions to the needs of struggling readers with a more focused targeting of each struggling reader's needs. Teachers are then available to monitor each student as he works on his level, observe progress and modify learning goals and activities.

The benefits of the PALS program include:

- appropriate instructional match
- increased practice opportunities
- improved student success and motivation
- creative application of instructional resources
- positive peer interaction
- opportunities for struggling students to demonstrate competence
- expanded opportunities for students with disabilities to participate successfully in the least restrictive environment
- increased instructional differentiation

Individualized instruction (Tier 3) for students reading below grade level will be based on each student's needs rather than on a prescribed program protocol. In the third RTI tier, students' strengths and needs will be closely assessed and individual support and instruction will be based on assessment data.

Math intervention for students whose basic skills are substantially below grade level will be guided by the protocols outlined in *Assisting Students Struggling with Mathematics* (National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, 2009). These protocols will be employed as indicated by student assessment in both RTI Tiers 2 & 3. Many of these strategies are best-practice strategies embedded in *Everyday Math* curriculum and so will be addressed in

## B. Education Plan

Tier 1 instructional strategies as well:

- focus on whole numbers and operations (K-5)
- focus on rational numbers and whole number arithmetic (4-8)
- numerous clear models of easy and difficult problems
- problem solving teacher think-alouds.
- group problem-solving and strategy discussion
- review each session
- learn to categorize problems
- observe common underlying structures in problems and apply known strategies to similar problems
- work from concrete (manipulatives) to abstract
- use visual representations – number lines, diagrams
- quick fact review each session to promote retrieval
- on-going monitoring with curriculum embedded assessment
- re-group students as necessary
- allow students to chart their progress

Following a full implementation and review of RTI protocols, should a student continue to demonstrate difficulty mastering content and concepts, the SST may recommend that the student be evaluated to determine eligibility for Special Education services.

These identification protocols will be followed for students with limited English proficiency whose skill gaps are unrelated to their LEP status.

### **B.3 Support for Learning**

**B.3.1 Parent Involvement: Document support from parents of school-aged children who may be interested in sending their children to the proposed school. Support may be documented through inclusion of parents of school-age children from the district among**

## B. Education Plan

**the founders, the use of letters of support, surveys, or other tangible means. Applicants must show evidence of the demand for a charter school in this area.**

Among our founding board members, all but one is a parent of school-aged or soon to be school-aged children. To gauge the extent of interest in a public charter school, the founding members conducted a community needs assessment survey. Surveys were distributed widely throughout the community through daycare centers, after-school care programs and county-wide Head Start programs. The elements of educational programs which most parents identified as important to them were hands-on learning (92.7%), arts programming (56%), and academic rigor (50%). These elements became the foundation of MMPCS' academic design. Of those families responding, 76% indicated they would enroll their student in a school with these characteristics. (See Appendix V– Needs Assessment Summary)

To further document community support, individuals from across Allegany County and from a range of backgrounds have signed a petition supporting the establishment of a public charter school in the county. (See Appendix VI – Charter School Petition)

In order to develop a school population that reflects the diversity of Allegany County communities and to enhance educational programming opportunities for our students, our board has also reached out to the stakeholders and community leaders across the county. Many of these individuals have offered letters of support for MMPCS. (See Appendix VII – Letters of Support)

Individuals and agencies offering letters of support include:

- Cas Taylor, Jr. – Government Relations Consultant, Alexander & Cleaver
- Allegany County Chamber of Commerce Education Committee
- Mayor and City Council of Cumberland
- Andy Vick – Executive Director, Allegany County Arts Council
- Virginia Jessie – President, Community Unity In Action

## B. Education Plan

- Susan Stewart – Executive Director, Western Maryland Area Health Education Center
- Randy Sterne – Manager, Standard Bank
- Jonathan Gibraltar, PhD. – President, Frostburg State University
- Sudhir Singh, PhD. – Associate Dean and Professor of Finance, Frostburg State University College of Business
- Ahmad Tootoonchi, PhD. – Dean, College of Business, Frostburg State University
- Janice Keene – President, Evergreen Heritage Center Foundation
- Cathlyn Stylinski, PhD. – University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science
- Amy Riffle-Kouyeas - Executive Director, Tri-State Community School for the Arts
- Cherie L. Snyder - Professor/Director of Human Services, Allegany College of Maryland
- Maureen M. Brown – Director of Teacher Education, Allegany College of Maryland
- Robin Seddon – Field Placement and Education Faculty, Allegany College of Maryland
- Sherry VanMeter – Administrative Head, Beginnings Montessori
- Susan M. Keller – parent
- Susan A. Yearling - parent

**B.3.1.a Describe how the school plans to build and maintain family-school partnerships that focus on strengthening support for student learning, improving communication, and encouraging parental involvement in school operations.**

The MMPCS system of governance incorporates opportunities for active parent involvement.

## B. Education Plan

The MMPCS governance model is designed to promote open, constructive communication with the whole school community at board meetings where all students and parents are welcome. In MMPCS' system of governance, parents are encouraged to take active roles serving on committees, participating in the parent association and volunteering in school programming.

Our school culture will foster an "open-door" policy whereby parents, guardians and students are welcome to express their concerns and ideas to teachers, principal and board members in an informal and collegial atmosphere.

MMPCS' founders view parent volunteers as an essential component of a vibrant and well-functioning school community. The MMPCS Parent Association Chair will be a voting member of the school board. MMPCS' working board will consist of a range of standing and ad hoc committees which will be staffed and led by parent volunteers.

Parents and community members will also be invited into the student learning process as expert resources and as audiences for students' concluding presentations. As a part of on-going student assessment, teachers and parents will confer periodically to discuss students' progress in all domains.

For additional detail on MMPCS' plans to partner with families, see Appendix XVI – Plan for Family and Parent Involvement.

### **B.3.1.b Describe how parental satisfaction will be gauged and the process for gathering and publicizing parental satisfaction results.**

The MMPCS board aims to establish a culture wherein all members feel that they can voice their concerns, express their opinions or ask questions in a supportive and open environment. In this culture, the MMPCS Principal, staff and board will work to maintain open communication and present themselves to all family members as approachable partners in their students' education.

## B. Education Plan

To this end, MMPCS will periodically conduct parent satisfaction surveys and school-wide forums to gain information on how the board, administration and faculty can improve the practices of including all families in the school community. Where possible, exit surveys will be conducted should a student withdraw from MMPCS. Results of surveys and forums will be published in the MMPCS Annual Report and the MMPCS School Improvement Plan.

### **B.3.1.c Describe how parents will be involved in the charter school, including the school's operations or governance.**

The founding members envision high levels of parent involvement in school governance and operations. In order to promote parents' active involvement in school life, MMPCS will establish a unique system of governance which designates every parent/guardian of an MMPCS student a voting member of the Parent Association.

In MMPCS' "working" charter school board model, parents/guardians of each student will be members of the Parent Association. The Parent Association will elect a Parent Representative to serve as a voting member of the Board. The Parent Representative is entitled to nominate and elect school board committee chairs from among school parents/guardians and to vote on board level issues. Parents/guardians will be serving on a range of committees related to school operations.

Members are entitled to attend and address the elected board during regularly scheduled board meetings and thus will have opportunities to voice their concerns directly to the board.

### **B.3.1.d Identify methods for handling disputes between parents and the school.**

In MMPCS' democratic school culture, parties to a dispute are encouraged to address their concerns directly among themselves in pursuit of a resolution. However, because support is often necessary in resolving conflict, after this initial step parties may be directed to the school administrator or a board member as appropriate. In the event that the administrator or a board

## B. Education Plan

member are party to the dispute, an impartial third party from the elected board will serve to reach accord.

### **B.3.1.e For district schools converting to charter schools, provide evidence that parents/guardians and existing staff support the conversion of the school to a public charter school.**

Not applicable.

### **B.3.2 Community Participation: Describe the scope of community backing for the proposed charter school and its organizers. Describe developed partnerships and plans to further develop additional community partnerships. Provide a list of organizations that may partner with your school and the potential nature of those partnerships. Describe the coordination strategies that will integrate partnership activities into the school program. Discuss commitments (if any) for partnerships or other relationships with community organizations or individuals that would enrich the learning opportunities of students in your school. Document any commitments with letters of support that identify specific details of the commitments.**

Strong evidence of community participation is the founding board's composition. Every founding board member is a community member serving on a volunteer basis.

Throughout the planning process, founding board members have encountered widespread community support from parents, education professionals and community leaders. Founding board members have often been approached by parents in the community who would like to support and contribute to MMPCS at a community level. Teachers in Allegany County have expressed great enthusiasm at the prospect of a charter school operating in the county and have been supportive of the project in its development phase.

MMPCS and the Tri-State Community School for the Arts are collaborating to offer expanded programming to MMPCS students. Tri-State Community School of the Arts has developed an

## B. Education Plan

after-school program model to be offered on-site at MMPCS. This after-school programming will offer students choices to explore arts, media and movement led by local artists.

The board has been working closely with the City of Cumberland's Office of Economic Development to research facility options which would support the pursuit of MMPCS' non-profit mission as well as provide benefits to MMPCS' immediate neighborhood and larger community. The staff of the Office of Economic Development have also support the founding board in identifying local and regional funding sources.

MMPCS has developed a relationship with Standard Bank which is a local bank with a strong record of support for local communities and businesses. The MMPCS Board plans to pursue funding to finance facility modifications through Standard Bank in partnership with Charter School Development Corporation.

MMPCS has developed a relationship with the Allegany Arts Council that will offer MMPCS students opportunities to conduct project research by accessing individual and organizational members of the Arts Council. This partnership will also provide expanded opportunities for learning through arts integration in the curriculum including field research and collaboration with local entrepreneurs and technical experts.

The founding board has also cultivated a relationship with the Evergreen Heritage Center in order to develop educational opportunities which align with the MMPCS mission and Evergreen Heritage Center's mission of educational outreach. These opportunities may include field visits to the Evergreen Heritage Center for project research and collaborating with community partners through Evergreen Heritage Center programs.

The founding board has built a relationship with Community Unity In Action (CUIA) which is a community service organization focused on meeting the needs of students across Allegany County. CUIA is a vital grassroots organization which promotes parents' involvement in their children's lives in and out of school. The initial phase of this partnership has provided an avenue

## B. Education Plan

for the MMPCS founding board to broaden its reach into the community in gathering needs assessment data and gauging community support for a public charter school in Allegany County. The MMPCS founding board plans to continue this partnership throughout the awareness campaign and registration events.

The founding board has initiated a relationship with the Department of Elementary Education at Allegany College of Maryland. The MMPCS Board envisions collaborating with ACM to develop teacher training opportunities for future educators. ACM students would benefit from the opportunity to observe and participate in authentic learning pedagogy as part of their course requirements. MMPCS teachers will benefit from the opportunity to refine their pedagogical frame of reference by articulating it to students pursuing careers in education. MMPCS students will benefit by having additional adults in the classroom to provide instructional support as appropriate and to bring a fresh perspective on topics under study.

The MMPCS founding board envisions partnering with local culinary service providers, local growers and food producers to develop a nutritious school meal program in which students can play an active role.

The MMPCS founding board plans to recruit a qualified Community Programs Coordinator (CPC). This position will allow the MMPCS school community opportunities to benefit from the wealth of resources available in Allegany County communities. The CPC will be responsible for identifying community partners, building relationships with them and working with the school community to develop opportunities for real-life learning, community involvement in the life of the school and support of the MMPCS mission. The CPC will work with MMPCS students, faculty, administration and families to develop programming involving community partners in school operations such as a school meal program and in educational programming such as field research opportunities. For a thorough description of qualifications and responsibilities for this position, see section C.3.4.b.

Letters of support from partnering organizations can be found in Appendix VII.

## B. Education Plan

**B.3.3 School Organization and Culture: Describe the type of school culture the school aims to develop. Explain the strategies the school will employ to develop a positive culture that is supportive of students, faculty and families. The description may consider such topics as school leadership, how staff will be involved in management and administration, classroom organization, course structure, student grouping, classroom climate, student advocacy programs (such as mentoring), and the concept of the school as a "learning community."**

Our school aims to embody the following five traits:

1. MMPCS' school culture will foster student ownership of and active participation in authentic intellectual work.

The MMPCS culture will foster student ownership of and active participation in learning. Strategies to achieve this element of school culture are built into the MMPCS educational design. MMPCS' project approach encourages students to participate in making choices in their own learning process. When students' interests are incorporated into curricular activities and they are expected to make choices and express their opinions, students are more likely to engage in the construction of knowledge that is the hallmark of authentic intellectual work.

Curriculum-based assessment practices will also provide a platform for promoting students' sense of ownership and engagement. The curricula selected for MMPCS core content areas and intensive academic support rely on frequent and on-going assessment of students as a part of students' learning process. When assessment becomes a part of learning rather than the final objective, students learn to evaluate their own learning and collaborate with teachers to strengthen their own learning experiences. Assessment strategies also include the use of rubrics as a framework for student self-assessment. Student collaboration with teachers to develop rubrics will enhance student engagement and ownership of learning.

Students will also have a voice in MMPCS board level governance. Our school board will have a

## B. Education Plan

student representative from the middle school grades. The student representative's perspective on school life and learning will provide valuable insight in MMPCS' aim of promoting students' sense of ownership and engagement in their educations.

MMPCS' school administrative structure will tacitly reinforce the value of students' active engagement in school life. MMPCS' administration will consist of the Principal and the Administrative Assistant. This light administrative structure will lend itself to the sense among students that their contributions count and are not outweighed by a large and heavily directive administrative staff.

After-school programming will also promote students' taking an active role in their own development by presenting students with choices of activities and learning opportunities.

2. MMPCS will be an environment in which listening is valued and each individual is respected.

This principle is embedded in MMPCS' academic design. In order to participate in project learning students and teachers must be able to honor one another's contributions to exploring topics. Successful project work depends heavily on teachers' and students' abilities to share ideas, listen to others' ideas and resolve differences to achieve a common goal. All school staff will demonstrate respect for each individual and their ideas and will support students' development of the skills and behaviors that communicate this respect.

MMPCS' professional development model supports the development of this element of school culture. In their mentoring relationships and in job-embedded instructional support, teachers will be able to express themselves to open-minded colleagues who are eager to collaborate to address concerns and provide support for one another.

MMPCS' model of full inclusion for students with special needs will also promote this aim. MMPCS' commitment to including all students in learning will establish the expectation for all students that everyone's contribution to the learning process is valuable and will be honored.

## B. Education Plan

Another strategy for developing this aspect of school culture is the morning meeting. In morning meeting students have an open forum to share ideas or experiences, to learn to listen to what other students are expressing and respond appropriately. Morning meeting provides as set time to build a socially safe learning environment where honest communication is respected. With teacher support, these values can then be carried out across the day.

3. MMPCS school culture will foster innovation in teaching and learning by encouraging students and teachers to take intellectual risks and providing them the space to learn from the outcomes.

MMPCS' professional development program will support this aim of school culture. Professional development will be embedded in instructional practice through mentoring and instructional coaching to support individual teachers' growth as educators. In the context of these collaborative, mentoring relationships, teachers will have the room to ask unconventional questions, the sense of safety to try new instructional strategies and expect supportive feedback from mentors and peers.

A weekly block planning time will give teachers the time and space to collaborate deeply in project design, present case studies or problem solve specific issues.

The MMPCS Student Support Team will also contribute to the sense of collegiality and support among teachers in that the team will have ownership of developing strategies to improve students' achievement. In this process, learning is enhanced and novel approaches are more likely to be employed because the team members are invested in students' outcomes and in supporting other teachers' instructional skill development.

MMPCS' academic design will also promote students' taking intellectual risks. In both the project inquiry approach and the content area curricula, the focus of learning is not on "finding the right answer", but on developing the intellectual dispositions and skills necessary for inquiry.

## B. Education Plan

Students are encouraged to apply their prior knowledge in novel ways and evaluate why their strategy did or did not work. In an approach where students and teachers are all constructing their knowledge, taking risks is viewed as part of the process and wrong-turns are seen as opportunities for learning.

4. MMPCS will establish a culture in which the community is welcome in school life.

MMPCS' governance structure will encourage families to participate actively in the life of the school and to contribute their efforts to enhancing student learning. This principle will be supported by the following strategies which are embedded into MMPCS' academic design and governance system:

- parent/guardian volunteers in school operations
- parent/guardian service on school board or committees
- open-door policy for Principal and board
- on-going community partnerships
- community members invited into school as experts for research or audiences for concluding presentations
- site visits for project research

5. MMPCS will celebrate local culture.

This aim of school culture will be supported by MMPCS' academic design wherein learning is relevant to students and has value beyond school. Research activities for project inquiry often involve meeting experts with unique knowledge of the topic of inquiry. MMPCS' learning approach will open the school doors to local experts in many areas. This research strategy will afford the MMPCS learning community the opportunity to collaborate with community partners and develop a deeper sense of Allegany County's unique culture and history.

**B.3.4 Extracurricular Activities: Describe plans for student participation in extracurricular activities such as athletics, music, field trips, etc. Any fees charged to**

## B. Education Plan

**students must be in an amount reasonable to the cost of the activity. Discuss any plans for collaboration with community organizations for the provision of recreational programs.**

MMPCS plans to partner with the Tri-State Community School of the Arts in order to provide after-school programming for students interested in exploring a variety of arts media including painting, music instruction, movement and other areas.

The MMPCS founding board plans to create a standing committee on extracurricular activities so that students and families will have the opportunity to identify and marshal resources to bring activities of interest to MMPCS' community life.

**B.3.5 Safety, Order, and Student Discipline: Describe the school's philosophy regarding student behavior and discipline for the general student population and special needs students. Summarize the school's discipline policy or code of conduct. Include tools that will be used such as meetings, outreach and/or a family handbook. Describe the role of teachers, administrators, and other school staff in monitoring student behavior, advising and mentoring students, maintaining communication with parents and families, and other activities associated with orderly schools.**

Because learning requires a safe and orderly environment, MMPCS will adhere to the ACPS Board of Education's student conduct and discipline policies, including specific policies on Harassment, Intimidation and Violence; Substance Abuse; Weapons; Student Interrogations, Searches and Arrests; Discipline; and Telecommunications. In-school discipline will be consistent with the specific procedures related to each of these policies and law enforcement will be notified as necessary when legal infractions occur.

MMPCS will adhere to the ACPS student discipline policy stating that each school's Principal is responsible for maintaining discipline in his/her school.

Students and parent/guardians will be informed of the MMPCS code of conduct and general

## B. Education Plan

procedures at new family orientation. Discipline policies and procedures will also be published in the MMPCS handbook to be distributed to every enrolled family for on-going reference.

Teachers will be responsible for monitoring student behavior on a daily basis. Teachers are expected to model appropriate behaviors and provide positive behavior support for students in all school activities. Instructional assistants will also model appropriate behavior, monitor student behavior and provide positive behavioral support under the supervision of the lead teacher.

Teachers may seek support for a student's behavioral challenges from mentor colleagues, the Principal and/or the Student Support Team. Teachers will communicate professionally, empathetically and openly with parents/guardians regarding their child's behavior issues. Students' families will be regarded as key resources and partners in developing strategies to support students' positive engagement in MMPCS school life.

Teachers will collaborate with parents/guardians, the Principal and Student Support Team as necessary in identifying community resources to support students' successful participation in their home and school roles.

In keeping with MMPCS' educational philosophy that intellectual and social-emotional development are interdependent, discipline issues will be addressed in the context of a child's developmental profile. The principal and teachers will maintain open communication with the parents of a student demonstrating behavioral difficulties. Open communication will allow educators and parents to develop a comprehensive plan encompassing family and school supports to promote the student's successful school participation.

Information concerning specific student behavior will be treated as confidential and will occur in a face to face format or a phone conversation. Electronic communication such as e-mail or texting regarding student discipline matters will be discouraged due the risk of compromising student confidentiality and the potential for miscommunication in these formats. Acceptable formats for communication regarding discipline issue include parent-teacher meetings with

## B. Education Plan

Principal involvement as necessary or upon request and phone conversations. These conferences will occur in a private setting such as an office with a door in order to protect student information.

Should a student consistently demonstrate behaviors which adversely affect the learning environment, the principals and teachers may refer the student to the Student Support Team for review and additional support strategies.

For students in grades 6-8, discipline or behavior issues may be addressed in general terms during student advisory group meetings. This format will afford students the opportunity to reflect on and articulate their perspectives on specific issues that are affecting them and the learning environment at MMPCS.

**B.3.6 Professional Development for Teachers, Administrators, and Other School Staff: Describe plans for developing and implementing an effective professional development program. How will teachers, administrators, and other school staff be involved in the design and identification of such opportunities. Describe how these plans support the mission, goals and design of the school. Provide a timeline showing how often professional development opportunities will be available for your staff. Include plans to participate in professional development opportunities provided by the Local Education Agency (LEA).**

### Pre-service training

The school year for staff will start 10 school days prior to student arrival so that our teachers will have the opportunity to train in core content area curricula and to deepen their skills with respect to the project inquiry approach. Pre-service trainings will include in Everyday Math, Great Books Shared Inquiry, FOSS modules and Language Arts training and professional development with project approach teacher specialists.

### Team Planning

## B. Education Plan

Each week, two hours will be set aside for a school-wide faculty meeting. The goal of this meeting is to provide team planning opportunities for faculty and to integrate team strategic planning and improvement across the curriculum and culture of MMPCS. During this planning period, teachers will have the opportunity to contribute to the strategic planning process by discussing their professional development interests and the unique needs of their students. Discussions regarding students' development and achievement will allow teachers to more comprehensively support students' with high quality and consistent instruction within and across grade levels.

This meeting will also be an opportunity for teachers to collaborate on instructional practice and curricular content such as project ideas and strategies for supporting student learning. Faculty may also choose to use this time to present student case studies, to identify instructional supports for specific student challenges and collaborate to support mission-driven instructional practices.

### Professional Learning Community

This block planning time will allow teachers the opportunity to collaborate as a professional learning community. Faculty will discuss alignment of learning goals with instruction, work together to analyze student data, collaborate to develop and share strategies to meet instructional challenges, discuss best-practices and their integration into instruction and explore strategies to support student learning within the context of each student's life circumstances.

### Targeted Professional Development and Data Analysis

The team planning agenda will most often be set by teachers who will identify professional development focus areas based on analysis of student achievement data. On-going assessment practices will provide teachers with current individual student data which will help teachers identify professional development needs. Assessment protocols will also enable teachers to compare student performance to learning standards and modify instruction based on data.

### Teacher Specialists

## B. Education Plan

In response to student achievement data, teacher specialists with expertise in project learning and authentic assessment will be contracted to provide guidance in instructional planning and delivery, and alignment of curricula and pedagogy. Teacher specialists will support faculty in analyzing student data as a guide for instructional decision-making. Teacher specialists will also participate in the MMPCS mentoring process by providing classroom embedded instructional support. Teacher specialists will also be identified among MMPCS faculty to serve as instructional leaders in areas of professional strength.

### Staff Development Days

MMPCS staff development days will be used to address concerns that teachers have raised or needs that have been identified by student data analysis. On these days, teachers will have opportunities to attend conferences or have on-site training. Staff training days may also be used to address the integration of skills tested on MSA with authentic learning standards.

Each teacher will establish their own professional development plan to extend their knowledge of specific subject areas, integrating curricula and differentiating instruction. Following individual, off-site professional development activities, attendees will be asked to lead a faculty in-service to share their insights and experiences resulting from their training.

### Classroom Embedded Instructional Support

MMPCS' professional development will also include mentoring partnerships for all teachers. Peer-supported professional development will be centered around supportive relationships between teachers with complementary skills and experiences. An important element of the mentoring relationship will be classroom embedded instructional support. In this model, two teachers work together by co-teaching or modeling, observing and practicing problem solving approaches in the classroom during real lessons with students. The benefits of this approach to improving individual's teaching practice include:

- problem solving in situ
- opportunities for supported practice
- immediate feedback

## B. Education Plan

- observing elements of instruction such as non-verbal communication, voice quality and other seldom articulated elements which heavily influence instructional effectiveness

The school principal will be considered MMPCS' strongest teacher and will spend time in this lead teacher role collaborating with each teacher in classroom embedded instructional support.

### Professional Development Collaboration with ACPS

In keeping with the collegial and supportive relationship the MMPCS founding board has developed with the leadership of Allegany County Public Schools, MMPCS will extend invitations to ACPS faculty to attend MMPCS trainings as space allows. MMPCS also requests to be kept apprised of professional development opportunities with ACPS that might support MMPCS faculty in their pursuit of the MMPCS vision and mission, offer opportunities to promote enhanced relationships between MMPCS and ACPS faculty and administrators or trainings essential to operations of Maryland public schools.

### Professional Development Support of Mission, Goals and School Design

The MMPCS professional development plan supports the school mission of being a community of learners wherein faculty can learn by taking intellectual risks, ask unconventional questions and work collaboratively to refine their teaching craft. Mentoring relationships provide a professional learning community in which teachers collaborate to engage in reflective practice in the process of teaching. Targeted professional development opportunities based on student performance data will support teachers in improving instructional practices in the authentic learning project approach and achieving school goals.

### Professional Development Timeline

In addition to pre-service training, MMPCS will have professional development days which parallel those of ACPS. Concurrent teacher training days will limit potential scheduling conflicts for families which have children enrolled in MMPCS as well as ACPS and provide opportunities for collaborative professional development between MMPCS and ACPS.

## B. Education Plan

**B.3.7 Structure of the School Day and Year: Indicate whether the school plans to operate under the district calendar. If not, provide a copy of the school’s calendar in the first year of its operation. Including the number of days the school will be in session, additional teacher only days, the daily hours of operation, and the way the school day will be organized for instruction, independent study, and extra- or co-curricular activities, if any.**

### **Daily Schedule**

8:30	Arrival
8:30-8:45	Morning Meeting
8:45-11:45	Morning Instructional Block
11:45-1:00	Lunch/recess
1:00- 3:00	Afternoon Instructional Block
3:30	Dismissal

Instructional blocks are provided in the morning and afternoon to allow students the uninterrupted work time necessary to focus on academic skills and to engage deeply in the inquiry process of project work. Teachers at each grade level will organize their instructional blocks across the school week and the semester to best support their students’ achievement of academic goals. Arts programming will be scheduled during the instructional blocks. When not exploring visual media with students in the studio, the visual arts teacher will be “pushing” into the classrooms to support students’ documentation in project work through visual media.

MMPCS will operate under the ACPS district calendar to accommodate families who may have children enrolled simultaneously in MMPCS and ACPS.

### **B.4 Accountability Plan**

**To gain and maintain charter renewal, the schools must prove that their students have achieved the educational skills specified in the contract. Students are required to take all mandated state and local tests and are required to meet the same standards as required for**

## B. Education Plan

**any public school.**

**B.4.1 Goals Against Which the School's Success Will be Judged: List and discuss the goals and objectives this school will seek to achieve and against which the school's performance will be measured. Include student academic and nonacademic performance goals, management effectiveness goals, and goals related to the school's unique mission. Goals should be broadly stated and supported by objectives that are clear, generally quantifiable and always measurable. Objectives should include clear standards for what will be achieved and how that will be measured. In creating academic performance goals, consider multiple measures. For example, goals relative to aggregate scores in year one versus year three and/or aggregate student gains from year to year or in relation to their district peers.**

### Academic Program Goals

Goal 1: Students will demonstrate the development of skills necessary for authentic intellectual work (construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, elaborated communication and collaboration, connecting learning to the real world).

Objective 1: Students, through project work, will demonstrate the application of prior knowledge by planning, researching, solving project problems and presenting their findings 90% of opportunities as measured by rubrics, authentic assessment tools, student/teacher checklists and observation.

Objective 2: Students, through project work, will demonstrate collaboration with peers and teachers as evidenced by building shared consensus and resolving differences of opinion and working toward shared goals 90% of opportunities as measured by rubrics, authentic assessment tools, student/teacher checklists and observation.

Objective 3: Students, with minimal teacher direction, will demonstrate elaborative communication skills as evidenced by effectively questioning one another, actively listening and communicating project results with a specific audience 90% of opportunities as measured by

## B. Education Plan

rubrics, authentic assessment tools, student/teacher checklists and observation.

Objective 4: Students will apply new knowledge and learning to real-life situations and problems as demonstrated by integrating field research and expert feedback into classroom and project research and presenting project findings to authentic audiences 90% of opportunities as measured by rubrics, authentic assessment tools, student/teacher checklists and observation.

Goal 2: Students will demonstrate consistent progress in meeting National Common Core Standards at each grade level.

Objective 1: 90% of students will demonstrate progress from baseline assessment results as measured by criterion-referenced teacher/parent observation checklist (formative and summative) and/or curriculum-based assessments.

Objective 2: 90% of students will meet grade-level National Core Content Standards as measured by curriculum-based assessment, assessment rubrics, student/teacher observation, criterion-referenced checklists and other authentic assessment tools developed for project work evaluation.

Goal 3: Students' MSA scores will meet or exceed AMO standards by the second year of operation.

Objective 1: 90.6 % proficiency aggregate MSA scores in reading by the 2012 MSA administration cycle.

Objective 2: 89.7 % proficiency aggregate MSA scores in reading by the 2012 MSA administration cycle.

Objective 3: 95.3 % proficiency aggregate MSA scores in reading by the 2013 MSA administration cycle.

Objective 4: 94.8 % proficiency aggregate MSA scores in math by the 2013 MSA administration cycle.

## B. Education Plan

Management effectiveness goal:

Goal 4: MMPCS' board and administration will demonstrate prudent fiscal management and stewardship of public funds.

Objective 1: MMPCS Board and administration will maintain a balanced budget for each year of operations.

Objective 2: MMPCS Board and administration will develop fiscal policies and internal controls to promote transparency and accountability.

Governance system goal:

Goal 5: Parents and guardians of students will participate in school-wide decision making and in the school community.

Objective 1: 80% of parents/guardians will participate in school governance or operations activities by the end of the 2011-2012 academic year.

**B.4.2 Indicators of Performance: For each goal listed above, list and discuss performance indicators which will be used to determine how well the students and the school have performed. How will these indicators be measured and reported?**

Indicators for Goal 1:

I. Construction of Knowledge

II. Disciplined Inquiry

A. Prior Knowledge

B. In-depth Understanding

C. Elaborated communication

III. Connecting Learning to the Real World

These indicators will be measured through curriculum-based projects, criterion-based assessment, portfolio assessment, student/teacher observations checklists, rubrics and other authentic assessments. (See B.4.2.b and B.4.6 – Assessment Tools)

## B. Education Plan

School-wide achievement of these indicators will be reported in narrative and data summaries in the MMPCS annual report and in the MMPCS School Improvement Plan.

Indicators for Goal 2:

Indicator 1: consistent student progress toward achieving each grade level National Common Core Standards

Indicator 2: increased mastery of grade level National Common Core Standards skills on curriculum-based assessments

Baseline and progress on these indicators will be measured by periodic student progress reports, criterion-referenced assessments, teacher observation, curriculum-based assessment, portfolio assessment and authentic assessments and baseline assessments. (See B.4.2.b and B.4.6 Assessment Tools)

School-wide achievement of these indicators will be reported in narrative and data summaries in the MMPCS Annual Report and in the MMPCS School Improvement Plan (See B.4.8 - School Improvement Plan)

Indicators for Goal 3: MSA scores in math, reading and science for all subgroups will be used to measure proficiency.

Indicators for Goal 4:

Indicator 1:MMPCS will undergo an annual financial audit by a qualified, disinterested party. Audit reports will be part of MMPCS' public record and will be available upon request and as part of MMPCS' Annual Report.

Indicator 2:Board meetings will be held monthly for the first academic year to ensure adequate oversight of emerging practices and principal performance. School data and finances will be reviewed. Data will include preliminary student performance data, MSA results as available, presentations by faculty, students and administration.

## B. Education Plan

Progress regarding these indicators will be available in the MMPCS annual report.

Indicators for Goal 5: Parent/guardian participation in school governance and school life will be measured by attendance at curricular and extra-curricular events, attendance at board meetings, participation on school committees, board membership and voting in school-wide board elections.

School-wide achievement of these indicators will be reported in narrative summaries in the MMPCS Annual Report and in the MMPCS School Improvement Plan.

**B.4.2.a As public schools, charter schools receiving funds under any of the federal education programs are subject to a number of requirements under the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB). Describe your knowledge of NCLB and how NCLB will affect your school's accountability program.**

The founding board recognizes NCLB is the legislative mandate that drives and measures school performance and achievement. For example, MSA testing was instituted as a result of NCLB legislation. NCLB has become part of the fabric of Maryland schools and MMPCS will embrace it as a guide to its efforts and comply with all regulations related to NCLB.

Under NCLB, states are required to implement accountability systems such as Maryland's MSA testing in all public schools. These assessments measure student progress in reference to state standards in grades 3-8. Testing data is disaggregated by poverty, race, ethnicity, disability and LEP to ensure all students' achievement. The goal of MMPCS is to meet or exceed AYP standards each year. The founding board understands MMPCS is subject to all regulations and improvement plan requirements applied to public schools not meeting state standards.

**B.4.2.b Describe non-mandatory assessment tools that will be used to establish and monitor student academic and non-academic progress.**

## B. Education Plan

### Curriculum-based assessment

MMPCS curricula include varied embedded formative and summative assessments which are carried out through the course of the learning activities.

### Everyday Math Assessment

An important component of Everyday Math is on-going assessment. On-going assessment items are included in every lesson and provide immediate information on each student's understanding of the concepts under study that day. Readiness and enrichment activities are included to address the needs of both students who would benefit from more practice and review and for students who are ready to apply new skills in new ways.

Summative assessment for each unit includes students' self-assessment using skills rubrics, oral and white board performance assessments, written assessments and open response questions for portfolios.

In addition, EasyCBM Math assessments will be used to provide additional measures of students' math skills and progress from baseline. (See B.4.5. – Baseline Performance.)

### Transition Math

Transition Math is designed to incorporate on-going assessment of students' mastery of math concepts. Assessments include formative Progress Self-tests and solutions. Daily review questions provide opportunities for teachers and students to identify areas of difficulty and address them quickly. Transition Math is compatible with Differentiated Authentic Assessments which provide students opportunities to demonstrate their application of skills in problem-solving.

### Fountas and Pinnell Guided Reading Assessment

The guided reading leveled-reader program is based on continuous assessment of student's reading habits and use of appropriate reading strategies. Reader levels are grouped by grade

## B. Education Plan

making it easy to determine which students are meeting grade-level benchmarks.

Baseline assessment is conducted using a running record wherein a teacher records a student's reading behaviors during a read aloud. These formative assessments help teachers identify the reading strategies a student uses. Running records become a guide for instructional decisions. Observation checklists accompany each reading level to allow teachers to document students' progress and need for additional support over the course of a reading level.

Students' basic reading skills will be assessed using the Dynamic Indicators of Early Literacy Skills system (DIBELS). DIBELS assessments will be administered throughout the year to gauge student progress. (See B.4.5 - Baseline Performance)

### FOSS Assessment

FOSS has developed three assessment goals: content knowledge, conducting investigations and building explanations. Formative assessments are embedded into investigations for continuous monitoring and to inform teachers' instructional decisions. Formative assessments are based on teacher observation and interview notes. FOSS teacher checklists focus on long-term learning goals such as students' habits and dispositions in scientific inquiry as well as content knowledge for each unit.

Summative assessments include end-of-module performance and written assessments, portfolio assessment and checklists. Performance assessments call for the use of equipment, writing observations and recording findings. Written assessments center on vocabulary and basic understanding. Portfolio assessments allow for a more holistic evaluation of students' learning. Students assemble their portfolios using a unit-specific checklist to include work samples which illustrate their mastery of content, engagement in inquiry, and development of logical and communication skills.

### Authentic Assessment

Because what is measured becomes what is taught, MMPCS will focus assessment on measuring

## B. Education Plan

authentic learning outcomes. Authentic assessment ensures the assessment data teachers gather demonstrate content validity in reference to goals. As with curriculum, standards and instructional methods, authentic assessments ensure that measurement of student progress aligns with MMPCS mission and goals.

### Differentiated Authentic Assessment

Differentiated Authentic Assessment (DAA) is a form of performance assessment which is consistent with project learning and authentic intellectual work. In DAA, students use their academic skills to demonstrate their mastery of concepts and big ideas. Students have opportunities to demonstrate construction of knowledge and use of varied strategies in problem solving because assessment tasks apply to real-life situations. Assessments can be modified to include higher level skills for those who are ready or support for those who need it. (Moon, et al 2002)

Differentiated Authentic Assessment allows students to demonstrate knowledge and skills that have meaning beyond school. (Dana & Tippins in Moon). Differentiated Authentic Assessments focus on concepts and big ideas that are meaningful rather than micro-facts or micro-skills. DAA can be done in school classrooms, focus on quality product or performance not the “right answer” and often drive inquiry by raising new problems or questions. (Moon, 2002)

Assessments are carried out using rubrics which focus on student strengths and demonstration of student expertise. DAA rubrics focus on the essence of a task not what is easiest to score. DAA rubrics have clear criteria which are known to and established by student and teachers. (Moon, et al. 2002)

Differentiated Authentic Assessment rubrics identify what concepts and learning standards are being assessed as well as skill domains and specific skills. DAA rubrics establish assessment criteria and point values for each domain being assessed. (See Appendix VIII – Differentiated Authentic Assessment Rubrics)

## B. Education Plan

Authentic assessment will also include portfolio assessment to document learning standards related to project work. Student work samples in portfolios may include:

- samples of creative writing such as stories, poetry or plays
- letters written as part of project work
- journal entries or narrative descriptions of project work
- research summaries
- written reflections on readings or project work
- graphic organizers for project planning
- graphic organizers used to enhance skill development
- recordings of oral reading or oral presentations
- interviews
- arts integrated documentation of learning
- materials/publications developed as part of concluding presentations
- performance assessments and rubrics
- learning logs
- homework
- questions
- notes
- documentation of problem solving

Concluding presentations are another means of assessing student learning. DAA rubrics can be developed as performance assessments of project learning. Performance assessments may include:

- simulations/demonstrations
- debates
- open-ended response exercises
- interviews

Other authentic assessments may include:

## B. Education Plan

- open-ended or extended response exercises
- standardized or teacher created tests
- criterion-referenced or narrative progress reports
- student- and teacher-developed rubrics and scoring criteria for quality work
- student self-assessment
- teacher observation

The project approach allows for a language-rich learning environment wherein students and teachers are communicating deeply and in multiple forms. This environment provides manifold opportunities for assessing students' written expression through samples included in portfolios and on-going curriculum-based written expression.

### Formative and Summative Assessment Tools

Teachers and students will employ observation checklists to document behaviors and skills which students demonstrate during project work. Checklists can be customized to suit specific tasks in project work. For example, when observing students writing letters, a teacher's checklist might include items such as: recognizes initial and ending sounds, uses a period to end a sentence, establishes and maintains a formal style or provides a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented. Observation checklists may be based on learning standards and are developmentally appropriate.

Checklists will help determine what skills need to be addressed. Teacher checklists will provide valuable information to guide instructional decision-making. Checklists which are administered several times over the course of the year will provide repeated opportunities to observe each child's demonstration of a skill and serve to document each student's progress over time.

Rating scales can be a useful tool in documenting students' development of intellectual dispositions. Likert rating scales will provide opportunities to measure students' performance in areas such as demonstrating curiosity, frequency of questions and application of prior knowledge

## B. Education Plan

to new learning.

Comparative dictation is a useful assessment tool wherein prior knowledge is documented in the form of a response to a question related to the topic under study. When the same question is presented following the project conclusion and the response compared with the first response, students' gains in factual information and their construction of knowledge are clearly demonstrated. Comparative dictation also offers teachers greater insight into individual students' cognitive processes to inform instructional decisions. Similarly, students' meta-cognitive processes are enhanced by comparison of their 'before' and 'after' performances.

### **B.4.3 Promotion and Graduation: Describe policies and standards for promoting students to the next grade, achievement level, or grouping level.**

Final promotion decisions will be based on grade level teachers' recommendations. Teacher evaluation of student progress in reference to National Common Core Standards and Maryland Core Curriculum will be used in conjunction with student and parent collaboration to determine readiness to move to the next grade level.

Decisions regarding student retention will be based on teacher recommendation and subject to final approval by the Principal.

### **B.4.4 Targets: For each goal, define benchmarks that represent substantial progress against each indicator.**

Indicators and benchmarks for school goals

Goal 1 has three indicators.

The first indicator is students' construction of knowledge. Benchmarks for this indicator include: applying skills in new ways, organizing and manipulating ideas and information to solve problems and producing new meanings and understanding.

## B. Education Plan

The second indicator is disciplined inquiry. Benchmarks for disciplined inquiry include: application of prior knowledge. The second benchmark is in-depth understanding which is demonstrated by the ability to manipulate and generalize information and use it to hypothesize and arrive at conclusions. The third benchmark is elaborated communication which is demonstrated by engagement in extended collaborative conversation with teachers and peers, production of extended written elaboration of understanding, explanation or conclusions related to topic and communication for improved and shared understanding of ideas or topics.

The third indicator is connecting learning to the real world.

Benchmarks for this indicator include: producing work that is personally meaningful, articulating connections between classroom knowledge and community, producing work to influence audience beyond school

Goal 2 has two indicators: 1) consistent student progress toward achieving each grade level National Common Core Standards and 2) increased achievement relative to baseline with regard to National Common Core Standards skills on curriculum-based assessments. Student progress in both indicator areas will be benchmarked against National Common Core Standards.

Goal 3 indicators are MSA scores and disaggregated data in math, reading and science for all subgroups will be used to measure proficiency. Student progress in these indicator areas will be benchmarked against in-district peer MSA scores, including disaggregation by sub-category.

Goal 4 indicators are:

- 1) MMPCS will undergo an annual financial audit by a qualified, disinterested party. Audit reports will be part of MMPCS' public record and will be available upon request and as part of MMPCS' Annual Report.
- 2) Board meetings will be held monthly for the first academic year to ensure adequate oversight of emerging practices and principal performance. School data and finances will be reviewed. Data will include preliminary student performance data, MSA results as available, presentations by faculty, students and administration.

## B. Education Plan

These organizational management indicators will be benchmarked against independent audit reports, GAAP standards and emerging best-practices in non-profit board oversight and governance.

Goal 5 indicators are parent/guardian participation in school governance and school life which will be measured by attendance at curricular and extra-curricular events, attendance at board meetings, participation on school committees, board membership and voting in school-wide board elections.

Indicators for parent/guardian participation will be benchmarked the MMPCS Mission and emerging best-practices in family participation in their children's schools.

### **B.4.5 Baseline Performance: Describe how and when a baseline for measuring performance and progress will be established, including how required assessments can be used for this purpose.**

Baseline skills in reading will be assessed using the Dynamic Indicators of Early Literacy Skills system. (University of Oregon, Center for Literacy) This assessment tool measures skills that are indicators of future reading achievement such as Phonological Awareness, Alphabetic Principle, Fluency with Connected Text, Vocabulary, and Comprehension. Baseline assessment for all K-3 students will be administered within 30 days of the start of the academic year. Progress assessments will be administered throughout the year.

DIBELS data allows for early identification and support for students who are at-risk for reading difficulties. Individual student performance data in reference to cut-off scores indicate whether a student is meeting criterion-referenced benchmarks and the likelihood of meeting future benchmarks. At-risk students will receive supplemental reading support or SST support as indicated.

Fountas & Pinnell Guided Reading curriculum-based assessments such as running records will provide additional data in establishing reading baselines.

## B. Education Plan

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics recommends a comprehensive assessment program consisting of formative and summative assessments. As described above (See B.4.2.b), Everyday Math, Transition Math and FOSS are embedded with assessment activities which provide a wide-based data set for assessment. Using these curriculum-based assessment tools, students are given the opportunity to demonstrate their range and depth of skill mastery in a variety of circumstances. These curriculum-based tools also serve a commonly overlooked function of assessment which is to offer the student insight into his own learning processes and mastery of concepts. Baselines in math and science will be established using formative curriculum-based assessments embedded in the Everyday Math and FOSS curriculums and prior achievement data such as report cards.

EasyCBM Math will be used as an additional assessment tool to measure baseline skills and student progress throughout the year. EasyCBM Math has been developed by researchers at the University of Oregon to support data-driven instructional decision-making. Data from EasyCBM Math will assist teachers in identifying students whose math skills are below grade level or who have not made adequate progress meeting math standards during the academic year.

General readiness skills at each grade level will be assessed using criterion-referenced tools such as the Diagnostic Prescriptive Assessment (DPA). This teacher-administered tool will provide information regarding each student's skills upon entry into the next grade level. Instructional planning for support in specific skill areas will be based on this data.

MSA scores will be used as a general reference in identifying students who have not yet demonstrated proficiency in the core content areas of math and reading. Baseline assessments will supplement information from the MSA to provide a more complete learning profile which will guide instructional decisions and additional assessment as necessary.

Baseline for authentic learning standards will be taken throughout the project learning process. Initial interviews, self-assessment rubrics and other authentic assessment tools can be used in the

## B. Education Plan

first stages of project inquiry to establish baseline skills in content knowledge, collaborative skills and intellectual dispositions. Comparing formative with parallel summative assessment tools will enable teachers to assess each student's progress throughout the project inquiry process.

**B.4.6 Assessment Tools: Describe how assessment will align to the proposed curriculum, standards, and instructional materials. For each goal, describe how progress will be measured against the specified performance indicators. What tests and measures or other assessment tools will be used? What comparisons will be made and what other analyses will be done? How will results be displayed?**

Because what is measured becomes what is taught, MMPCS will focus assessment on measuring authentic learning outcomes. Because authentic learning is a primary school goal, data collection must demonstrate content validity with reference to goals. Therefore, assessment must be focused on measuring authentic learning.

Authentic assessment provides a means of assessing concept mastery, construction of knowledge and academic skill development. Assessment protocols are embedded into project learning. Students take ownership of their learning by participating in the development of assessment tools such as rubrics. When students know their learning goals they are not only able to achieve them more readily, but they are free to go beyond them.

Authentic and curriculum-based assessments are aligned with National Common Core Standards. The National Common Core Standards focus more on the whole skills and 'big ideas' which are necessary building blocks for higher order thinking. Authentic learning assessments will be rooted in the National Common Core Standards and designed to measure students' mastery of academic skills and their applications in meaningful work.

Instruction and assessment are aligned through curriculum-based assessments including curricular formative and summative assessment, rubrics, authentic assessments and portfolio

## B. Education Plan

assessments. MMPCS pedagogy is focused on developing intellectual dispositions. In the project approach, inquiry drives learning. Assessments are part of the learning feedback loop in which students collaborate in goal-setting, demonstrate their academic skills and progress throughout the project learning process and engage in self-assessment to improve their project outcomes.

### Measuring Progress Toward Goals

Goal 1: Progress toward this goal will be measured by developing Differentiated Authentic Assessment rubrics, criterion-referenced assessments, teacher observation and portfolio assessment to measure students' performance in each indicator area. Student progress will be measured by comparing baseline data to performance data over time. School-wide results will be reported in the MMPCS Annual Report and School Improvement Plan.

Goal 2: Progress toward this goal will be measured by tracking students' progress toward National Common Core Standards over time. Individual student progress will be recorded in the individual Student Progress Summaries. School-wide results will be reported in the MMPCS Annual Report and School Improvement Plan.

Goal 3: Progress toward this goal will be measured by comparison of aggregate and sub-group annual MSA AMOs for comparable groupings. Data will be compared with statewide and county-wide aggregate and sub-group data. Summary reports will be available in MMPCS' Annual Report, the MSDE Charter School Annual Report and, as with all public schools, in the Maryland Report Card.

Goal 4: Progress toward this goal will be measured by data and records documenting fiscal policy development, budgeting timelines and procedures, audit procedures, non-profit board meetings and other data. Board meeting minutes will document oversight processes related to school operations and finances, student achievement and principle performance. Quarterly budget reports will be presented to the board by the principal for the first year of operations. Current policies and procedures will be reviewed periodically to ensure best-practice

## B. Education Plan

implementation. School-wide budgeting and financial reports will be published in MMPCS' Annual Report. Policies adopted by the board will be posted on the school web-site or available upon request.

Goal 5: Progress toward this goal will be measured by parent/guardian attendance at board meetings, parent/guardians participation in board-level voting, parent survey data and parents/guardians participation in school-wide committees. Summary reports and recommendations may be requested by the board as needed. Parent participation data may be analyzed by sub-group to promote balanced participation across the demographic range of enrolled families. MMPCS data may be compared to ACPS county-wide data as part of summary reports. Summary updates on progress in this goal area will be published in the MMPCS Annual Report and School Improvement Plan.

**B.4.7 Reporting Performance and Progress: Describe the process and timetable through which accountability plan performance and progress will be reported to parents, the community, and to the chartering authority. Additionally, describe the process and timetable through which performance and progress in meeting adequate yearly progress will be reported to parents and the community, as required by the No Child Left Behind Act.**

School performance results will be available on request and as part of MMPCS' Annual Report.

MMPCS' School Improvement Plan is the vehicle for reporting achievement and school progress to the Allegany County Board of Education, parents and the school community. This report will be compiled annually prior to the start of the school year to be addressed. Parents will be able to access this report through a link on our web-site or on request through the school office.

Additional detail regarding data collection is covered in Section B.4.8

MSA test scores, school-wide DIBELS data and summaries of student progress relative to the National Common Core Standards will be furnished to ACPS via this report and published in the

## B. Education Plan

MMPCS Annual Report.

### **B.4.8 School Improvement Plan: Describe how assessment results will be used to develop a school improvement plan, improve classroom activities and contribute to individual student achievement.**

#### Student Data

Year one will provide Mountain Maryland C.P.S. staff and administration the opportunity to collect baseline data on students' skills.

Data sources will include:

- DIBELS scores will be used for all students K-3 for assessment and early identification of at-risk students.
- MSA scores
- Quarterly criterion-referenced performance assessment based on content standards
- Curriculum-embedded formative and summative assessments
- Curriculum-based assessments such as rubrics, teacher observation, student self-assessment, portfolio assessments
- Student attendance
- Parent and teacher surveys

Student data will be analyzed in aggregate and by sub-groups such as race/ethnicity, Special Ed, ELL, FARMS, and gender. Student performance data will be collected in core content areas such as reading, math, social studies and science as well as discipline and attendance.

#### School performance indicators

School performance indicators such as attendance, professional development, parent involvement and achievement of school goals will also be monitored by collecting and analyzing data from attendance records, student achievement data and parent and faculty surveys.

## B. Education Plan

### Faculty/Staff Perception Surveys

Anonymous surveys will measure faculty and staff perceptions of school leadership, professional development opportunities, collaborative decision-making, student conduct practices, effective use of resources and parent/community involvement and progress toward achieving the school mission.

### Parent/Community Perception Survey

Surveys will measure parents' and community stakeholders' perceptions of the schools' collaboration with parents, effective use of community resources, student progress and engagement, degree of parents' engagement in school operations and their children's learning activity. Surveys will include opportunities for parents and community members to offer suggestions for school improvement and program development.

Survey will be conducted each academic year. Data will be compiled and summarized for use in developing the school improvement plan for use in the next academic year. 2011-2012 assessment data will be used as a baseline in developing the first school improvement plan to be implemented in 2012-2013.

For the first year of operation, MMPCS' on-going school improvement process will require the flexibility and responsiveness to meet the needs of enrolled students. MMPCS' professional development plan and block planning time will allow teachers the opportunity to collaborate to meet the unique needs of students in a new setting through collaborative consultation to modify instructional strategies.

In the first year of operation, the focus of school improvement and governance will center on developing a school culture which is collaborative and adaptable in order to meet the learning needs of teachers and students.

## REFERENCES

Allegheny County Public Schools Middle School Task Force Report (2009). Allegheny County Board of Education. Accessed on-line 4/12/10.

[www.acps.allconet.org/assets/uploads/file/final.pdf](http://www.acps.allconet.org/assets/uploads/file/final.pdf)

Amigues, R. (1988). Peer interaction in solving physics problems: Sociocognitive confrontation and metacognitive aspects. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 45(1), 141–158.

American Association for the Advancement of Science. (1989). *Science for All Americans: Project 2061*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

April, A.(2001). Toward a finer description of the connection between arts education and student achievement. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 102(5), 25-26.

Anderson, W., & Lawrence, J. (2001). *Integrating music into the elementary classroom* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Wadsworth/Thomson Learning. Stanford, California.

Atwater, J. (1991). Achievement and Enrollment Evaluation of the Applied Learning Magnet Elementary Schools, 1990-1991 ED 345 861

Azmitia, M. (1988). Peer Interaction and Problem Solving: When Are Two Heads Better Than One? *Child Development*, v59 n1 p87-96 Feb

Barron, B. (2000). Achieving coordination in collaborative problem-solving groups. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 9(4), 403–436.

Barron, B. (2003). When smart groups fail. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 12(3), 307–359.

## B. Education Plan

Bartscher, Gould, & Nutter (1995). Increasing student motivation through project-based learning. Master's research project, Saint Xavier and IRI Skylight. (ED 392549).

Boaler, J. (1997). Experiencing school mathematics: Teaching styles, sex, and settings. Open University Press. Buckingham, UK.

Boaler, J. (1998). Open and closed mathematics: Student experiences and understandings. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*, 29, 41–62.

Bransford, J. D., Brown, A. L., & Cocking, R. R. (Eds.). (1999). How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school. Washington, DC: National Research Council.

Bresler, L. (2009). Syntegration or Disintegration? Models of Integrating the Arts Across the Primary Curriculum. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, vol. 10, no. 28

Bronson, P. (2010). The Creativity Crisis. *Newsweek*, July 19.

Caulfield, J., Kidd, S., Kocher, T. (2000). Brain-based instruction in action. *Educational Leadership*, 58(3), 62-65.

Cohen, P. A., Kulik, J. A., & Kulik, C. C. (1982). Education outcomes of tutoring: A meta-analysis of findings. *American Educational Research Journal*, 19, 237–248.

Coleman, E.B. (1998). Using explanatory knowledge during collaborative problem solving in science. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 7(3–4), 387–427.

Cook, et al (1995). Improving Student Behavior through Social Skills Instruction. Master's Action Research Project. St. Xavier University.

## B. Education Plan

Cook, S. B., Scruggs, T. E., Mastropieri, M. A., & Castro, G. C. (1985). Handicapped students as tutors. *Journal of Special Education, 19*, 483–492.

National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences (2009). Assisting Students Struggling with Mathematics: Response to Intervention (RtI) for Elementary and Middle Schools. Accessed on-line:  
[http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/rti\\_math\\_pg\\_042109.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/rti_math_pg_042109.pdf)

Department of Education, Washington DC (1994). The arts and educational reform: Ideas for schools and communities. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED365621)

Dana, T.M and Tippins, D.J. (1993). Considering alternative assessment for middle level learners. *Middle School Journal, 25*(2), 3-5.

Department of Education, Washington DC (1994). The arts and educational reform: Ideas for schools and communities. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED365621)

Dewey, John (1916). Democracy and education: an introduction to the philosophy of education. Macmillan, New York.

Diffily & Sassman Heinemann, (2002). Project-based Learning with Young Children. Heinemann. Portsmouth NH

DeVries, R., Reese-Learned, H., and Morgan, P. (1991). Socio-moral development in direct-instruction, eclectic, and constructivist kindergartens: A study of children's enacted interpersonal understanding. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 6*(4), 473-517.

Edmiston, Rebecca K. and Fitzgerald, Linda May (2000). How Reggio Emilia Encourages

## B. Education Plan

Inclusion. *Educational Leadership*, Sept, 66-69

Edwards, C., Gandini, L., Forman, G., Eds. (1998) The Hundred Languages of Children. Ablex Publishing. Norwood, New Jersey.

Fuchs, L.S., & Fuchs, D. (1996). Combining performance assessment and curriculum-based measurement to strengthen instructional planning. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, 11, 183-192.

Fuchs, D., Fuchs, L.S., Mathes, P.G., & Simmons, D.C. (1997). Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies: Making classrooms more responsive to diversity. *American Educational Research Journal*, 34, 174-206.

Fuchs, D., Fuchs, L.S., Thompson, A., Al Otaiba, S., Yen, L., Yang, N., & Braun, M. (2002). Exploring the importance of reading programs for kindergartners with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. *Exceptional Children*, 68(3), 295-311

Free, W. P. (2004). Pictures and words together: Using illustration analysis and reader-generated drawings to improve reading comprehension. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 65 (12A), 203. (UMI No. 3156075)

Gardner, Howard (1993) Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice. Basic Books NY

Gallagher, S. A., Stepien, W. J., & Rosenthal, H. (1992). The effects of problem- based learning on problem solving. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 36, pp.195–200.

Ginsburg-Block, Rohrbeck, & Fantuzzo, 2006; A Meta-Analytic Review of Social, Self-Concept, and Behavioral Outcomes of Peer-Assisted Learning. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, v 98 n4 p 732-749

## B. Education Plan

Hardiman, Mariale H., (2003). Connecting Brain Research to Effective Teaching: The Brain-Targeted Teaching Model. Rowman & Littlefield Education. Lanham, MD.

Hatano & Iganaki, 1991; Hatano & Ignaki. (1991). Sharing cognition through collective comprehension activity. In L. B. Resnick, J. Levine, & S. Teasley (Eds.), Perspectives on socially shared cognition (pp. 331–348). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Heath 2001 Heath, S.B. (2001). Three's not a crowd: Plans, roles, and focus in the arts. *Educational Researcher* 30(7), 10-17.

Helm, Judy Harris and Katz, Lillian G. (2001) Young Investigators: The Project Approach in the Early Years. Teachers College Press, NY

Hetland, L., & Winner, E., (2001) The Arts and Academic Achievement: What the Evidence Shows. *Arts Education Policy Review*, May/June 2001 vol 102 No. 5 pp3-6

Johnson, D.W. & Johnson, R.T. (1975). Learning Together and Alone: Cooperation, Competition, and Individualization. Prentice Hall. New Jersey.

Johnson, D.W. and Johnson, R.T. (1999). Making Cooperative Learning Work. *Theory Into Practice*, Vol 38, no 2, pp67-79.

Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1981). Effects of cooperative and individualistic learning experiences on interethnic interaction. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 73, 444–449.

Johnson, D.W. & Johnson, R.T.(1989). Cooperation and competition: Theory and research. Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company.

Katz, L.J. & Chard, S.C. (1989). Engaging Children's Minds: The Project Approach. Ablex Publishing. Norwood, NJ.

## B. Education Plan

Helm, J.H. and Katz, L.G. (2001) Young Investigators: The Project Approach in the Early Years. Teachers College Press. Columbia University, New York.

King, 1990; King, A. (1990). Enhancing Peer Interaction and Learning in the Classroom Through Reciprocal Peer Questioning. *American Educational Research Journal*, 27(4), 664–687.

The National Council on the Teaching of English Eastern Michigan Writing Project’s “Qualities of Best Practice in Teaching Writing” enumerates elements for language arts education [www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Sections/Elementary/BestPracticeforParents.pdf]

National Council on Social Studies. (2008). Revision of NCSS Elementary Education Position Statement: Powerful and Purposeful Teaching in Elementary School Social Studies. Accessed on-line at:  
<http://communities.socialstudies.org/system/files/Revision+of+NCSS+Elementary+Education+Position+Statement.doc>

National Science Teacher Association. Official Position Statement: Scientific Inquiry. Accessed on-line at: <http://www.nsta.org/about/positions/inquiry.aspx>

Marcon, Rebecca A., (1995). Differential Effects of Pre-school programs on Inner-City Children. Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Indianapolis, IN

Marcon, Rebecca A., (2002). Moving up the Grades: Relationship between Preschool Model and Later School Success. *Early Childhood Research and Practice*, Spring

Marks, H.M., (2000). Student Engagement in Instructional Activity: Patterns in the Elementary, Middle and High School Years. *American Educational Research Journal*, Vol 37, No 1 pp153-184

## B. Education Plan

Miller, Louise B., Bizzell, Rondeall P., Long-Term Effects of Four Preschool Programs: Ninth- and Tenth-Grade Results. *Child Development*, 1984, 55, 1570-1587.

Miller, Louise B., Bizzell, Rondeall P., Long-Term Effects of Four Preschool Programs: Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Grades. *Child Development*, 1983, 54, 727-741

Moon, T.R., Callahan, C.M., Brighton, Catherine, M., Tomlinson, Carol A., (2002). Development of Differentiated Performance Assessment Tasks for Middle School Classrooms. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Washington, D.C. (ED 476 371)

Moore, A., Sherwood, R., Bateman, H., Bransford, J., & Goldman, S. (1996, April). Using problem-based learning to prepare for project-based learning. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York.

Morrison, J. (2006). The Attributes of STEM Education: The Student, The School, The Classroom. TIES STEM Education Monograph Series. Baltimore, MD.

Newmann, F.M., & Wehlage, G.G., (1993). Five Standards of authentic instruction. *Educational Leadership*, 50, 8-12.

Newmann, F. M., Bryk, A. S., Nagaoka, J. K. (2001). Authentic Intellectual Work and Standardized Tests: Conflict or Coexistence? Improving Chicago's Schools. Consortium on Chicago School Research, IL.

Newmann, Fred M., et al, (1995) Authentic Pedagogy: Standards That Boost Student Performance. Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools. Madison, WI.

Newmann, F. M., Marks, H. M., & Gamoran, A. (1995). Authentic pedagogy: Standards that boost student performance. *Issues in Restructuring Schools*, 8, 1-4.

## B. Education Plan

Newmann, F.M., Secada, W.G., Wehlage, G.G. (1995). *A Guide to Authentic Instruction and Assessment: Vision, Standards and Scoring*. Wisconsin Center for Education Research. Madison, WI.

O'Donnell, A. M., & Dansereau, D. F. (1992). Scripted cooperation in student dyads: A method for analyzing and enhancing academic learning and performance. In R. Hertz-Lazarowitz & N. Miller (Eds.), *Interaction in cooperative groups: The theoretical anatomy of group learning*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Phelps, E., & Damon, W. (1989). Problem solving with equals: Peer collaboration as a context for learning mathematics and spatial concepts. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 81(4), 639–646.

Qin, Johnson, & Johnson 1995, Quin, Z., Johnson, D., & Johnson, R. (1995). Cooperative versus competitive efforts and problem solving. *Review of Educational Research*, 65(2), 129–143.

Rosenfeld, M., & Rosenfeld, S. (1998). Understanding the “surprises” in PBL: An exploration into the learning styles of teachers and their students. Paper presented at the European Association for Research in Learning and Instruction (EARLI), Sweden.

Richards, A. G. (2003). Arts and academic achievement in reading: Functions and implications. *Art Education*, 19-23.

Russell-Bowie, D. (2009). Syntegration or disintegration? Models of integrating the arts across the primary curriculum. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 10(28).

Schwartz, 1995. A Team Approach to Cooperative Learning. *Teaching and Change*, v2, n2 -118-40 Winter.

## B. Education Plan

Schwartz, D. L. (1995). The emergence of abstract representations in dyad problem solving. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 4(3), 321–354.

Shepard, L.A. and Dougherty, K.C. (1991). Effects of high-stakes testing on instruction. Paper presented at the annual meetings of the American Educational Research Association and The National Council on Measurement in Education, Chicago, IL.

Shirouzu, Miyake, & Masukawa, 2002 Shirouzu, H., Miyake, N., & Masukawa, H. (2002). Cognitively active externalization for situated reflection. *Cognitive Science*, 26(4), 469–501.

Snow, C.E., Burns, M.S., & Griffin, P. (1998) Preventing reading difficulties in young children. Washington DC: National Academy Press.

Stepien, W. J., Gallagher, S. A., & Workman, D. (1993). Problem-based learning for traditional and interdisciplinary classrooms. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted Child*, 16, 338–357.

Thomas, J. W. (2000). A review of project based learning. (Prepared for Autodesk Foundation).

Vernon, D. T., & Blake, R. L. (1993). Does problem-based learning work? A meta-analysis of evaluative research. *Academic Medicine*, 68(7) 550–563.

Webb, N.M. (1985). Verbal Interaction and Learning in Peer-directed Groups. *Theory into Practice*, v 24 n1, p32-39. Winter

Webb, N. M., Troper, J. D., & Fall, R. (1995). Constructive activity and learning in collaborative small groups. *Journal of educational psychology*, 87(3), 406–423.

Wein, Carol Anne, (2008) Emergent Curriculum in the Primary Classroom: Interpreting the Reggio Emilia Approach in Schools. Teachers College Press, New York.

## B. Education Plan

Yuen, Lai Ha Freda (2009). From Foot to Shoes: Kindergartners', Families' and Teachers' Perceptions of the Project Approach. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, v37 n1 p23-33 Aug

## C. Operations Plan

### C. Operation Plan

**C.1 Organizational Structure: Describe the organizational structure of the school and the school governance plan. Provide an organizational chart which includes the LEA and demonstrates lines of communication and responsibility. If applicant has incorporated in the State of Maryland or has applied with the Internal Revenue Service for not-for-profit status, provide copies of these documents in an appendix. If you have not incorporated or applied for not-for-profit status, but plan to do so, please provide your plan and timetable.**

See Appendix IX – Organizational Chart

See Appendix X - Decision Making Matrix for details on communication and responsibility of Board of Directors, Principal and LEA

#### School Organizational Structure

MMPCS' principal is the instructional leader and administrator of the school. The principal is responsible for day-to-day operations and budgeting, supervising instructional practice, maintaining discipline and order and ultimately student performance. The principal is accountable to and takes direction from the board of directors. The board of directors oversees all personnel issues related to the principal.

Teachers are responsible for daily instruction, student performance and assessment, and classroom discipline. Teachers report to and take direction from the principal. The board may intervene in the event of personnel issues which rise to the level of disciplinary action or termination.

Instructional assistants are responsible for carrying out duties and activities at the direction of their supervising classroom teachers.

#### School Governance Plan

## C. Operations Plan

Our school governance plan is based on a board of directors with a structure of officers, by-laws (Appendix XI), and delegation of management to the principal who is the administrator of the school. In our governance model, there is a clear distinction made between the governance work of the board of directors and the administrative/management work of the principal and staff.

We are a legally incorporated entity governed by Maryland law and IRS regulations governing nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations. (See Appendix XII – Articles of Incorporation and Appendix XIII – IRS Form 1023 Application) The directors each have a personal fiduciary duty to look out for the long-term well-being of the school. The board is responsible for addressing major matters and the principal is responsible for running the school and implementing the board’s policies. Where appropriate, the principal will delegate responsibility to teachers, parents and students.

### **C.2 Governing Structure**

#### **C.2.1 Describe the composition, roles and responsibilities of the Board of Directors.**

The board of directors is composed of a broad cross-section of the school and local community. It includes the principal, faculty, student and parent representatives.

Each director has a personal fiduciary responsibility to look out for the long-term well-being of the school. The board is responsible for addressing major matters including: setting the school’s general policies and overall curriculum policies; approving and monitoring the school’s annual budget and financial procedures; fund-raising; hiring and evaluating the school’s principal and staff; approving personnel policies and monitoring their implementation by the principal; assuring that the charter school fulfills its charter contract; and strategic planning.

The board’s role is to ensure that the school’s policies, programming and decisions are aligned with the school’s mission and vision and compliant with local, state and federal

## C. Operations Plan

law. The board generally meets as a whole on a monthly basis and operates through various committees, including an executive committee.

The board is designed to support the principal, who then supports the teachers, who are in direct contact with our children every day.

### **C.2.2 Describe how Board members have or will be recruited, selected and trained. Include the role parents will have in the selection of the Board members, if any.**

#### Recruitment and Selection

The MMPCS Board recognizes the importance of long-range planning for board leadership recruitment and development. In our governance model, board recruitment and development is a year-round, ongoing activity. The board development committee shall be responsible for prospecting, contacting, recruiting, orienting, providing ongoing training and evaluating board directors.

Recruitment must be linked to the strategic plan. Following the completion of the strategic planning process, the Board Development Committee shall review the school's mission, vision, and goals to determine what skills, knowledge, personal contacts and expertise are needed to advance the strategic plan. By reviewing the current board's strengths and weaknesses the committee will be able to identify any gaps between the skills and knowledge possessed by current board members and those still needed on the board. Using this process the committee will be able to establish clear recruiting priorities for future board recruitment.

Once recruitment priorities and the number of projected vacancies are determined the committee will develop an initial list of prospective directors with whom the committee will make personal contact. This personal contact will allow the committee to assess the prospect's level of interest as well as give the committee an opportunity to provide the prospect with information about the school's mission, vision and educational programs. Once the prospect's initial interest is determined, an in-person orientation session will be

### C. Operations Plan

conducted which will provide an opportunity to give further information regarding the roles and responsibilities of board members, including detailed expectations for committee work, meeting attendance, fund-raising, etc. If at the end of this meeting, a prospect wishes to continue in the recruitment process, he or she will be asked to complete a Prospective Board Director Application Form (Appendix XIV) that provides some additional background information. (See also Appendix XV - Board of Director Job Description)

Once the orientation sessions are complete, the board development committee will then prepare a slate that includes the names of the candidates that reflect the recruiting priorities that were set at the beginning of the process. The board may, however, ask the committee to present the names of all individuals identified in the recruitment process described above. The board will then select a number of candidates to fill the vacant positions.

#### Parents' Role in Recruitment and Selection

10 of 11 initial directors are parents of children who will attend MMPCS and will be actively involved in the process of recruiting and selecting new board members. Further, the Parent Representative, elected by the members of the Parent Association, shall serve as a director with equal voting power. Parents will be asked to serve on the Board Development Committee and will be actively involved in the recruitment process.

#### Orientation and Training

Initial board orientation will be provided to all new directors. Directors will be provided with basic knowledge about the school including its mission and vision, financial information, educational programs and information which he or she will need to address major decisions and policy questions facing the school.

Ongoing board education and training will be provided based on directors' feedback on an annual assessment as to what information they need to be more effective members of the board. Some training can occur during regularly scheduled board meetings and can

## C. Operations Plan

take the form of a brief presentation by an outside resource regarding an emerging issue or review of an article presented in advance for discussion. Further training will be presented during short presentation and discussion sessions at a meeting scheduled for that particular purpose. Small numbers of directors may be involved in study groups tasked with becoming well informed about a particular subject area. Those directors would then share their knowledge with the board as a whole. Finally, the MMPCS Board will implement a process of committee rotation wherein board directors will be given the opportunity to serve on different committees where they can engage in new learning and bring a fresh perspective.

Our board is a member of Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations (MANO) whose mission is “to strengthen, educate and engage nonprofit organizations so they can successfully achieve their missions.” MANO provides numerous training and consulting services to help nonprofits improve their infrastructure and advance their capacity to fulfill their mission. Our directors will benefit from MANO’s in-person seminars, online learning, and other professional consulting services.

**C.2.3 If the Board of Directors is different than that of the founding group and already has been selected; provide the name, address, and one-page resume of each member, as well as a Statement of Interest and Qualifications, which includes the value they bring to the charter school.**

The initial board of directors is the same as the founding group described herein.

**C.2.4 Describe the terms of office of the proposed Board of Directors.**

The term of office of all members of the initial board of directors shall be one year. At the end of the first year, the board shall provide for staggered terms of its directors by designating approximately one-third of the directors each to one-, two- and three-year terms. Following the expiration of those designated terms, the term of each director shall continue for three years, except the term of any director who is the Parent, Faculty, or

## C. Operations Plan

Student Representative shall be one year.

No director, other than the principal, may serve for more than seven (7) consecutive years. The term of office of a director elected to fill a vacancy shall begin on the date of the director's election, and continues: (1) for the balance of the unexpired term in the case of a vacancy created because of the resignation, removal, or death of a director, or (2) for the term specified by the board in the case of a vacancy resulting from the increase of the number of directors authorized.

### **C.2.5 Describe the process by which the governing board will develop policies and make decisions about the operation of the school.**

The board will utilize the attached Decision Making Matrix (Appendix X) in its operation of the school. This approach reflects an understanding that issues, concerns and policy questions can originate from many sources: individual board directors, board committees, the principal, other staff, parents, students and community members.

Policies are designed to influence and control future decisions, directions and actions of the board and school. They will be reflective of the mission and vision of the school, lie within the scope of the board's authority, be adopted through proper board procedure, in compliance with legal and constitutional rights and requirements and communicated to those within the school's community they will affect.

Initially, the Executive Committee will review such matters and determine whether they should be brought to the full board, or based on current policy, assigned to the principal, board committees or another body to be dealt with. This will insure that governance matters receive the board's full attention and management matters will be delegated to those best suited to resolve those issues.

If it is determined that a new policy is needed, and that it should be brought to the full board, the Chair will assign a committee to gather the necessary information and draft a

Mountain Maryland Public Charter School application

September 1, 2010

Page 111

### C. Operations Plan

proposed policy. Depending on the issue, the committee may be composed of board directors, the principal, teachers, parents, students and/or community members. The committee should consider sample policy language, analysis and experience from other schools as well as education research, local input and the input of affected parties. It will often be the case that the principal is best qualified to make recommendations concerning the new policy since he or she is intimately involved in the operation of the school on a daily basis and is often most aware of what is needed.

The committee will report its preliminary findings to the board. Once the board has reached consensus on policy content, the committee will draft proposed language for the board's review. In some instances, the school's legal counsel may be asked to review the draft policy to insure that it is consistent with applicable school laws and regulations. When the draft policy is ready for review, it will be placed on the board's agenda for a first reading. Notice of the meeting will be given to the school's community in advance so that interested persons may attend and participate in the discussion. A special school community hearing may be held for important or controversial draft policies. The committee will revise the proposed language based on comments and suggestions for changes and improvements. In some instances it may be appropriate to hold a second community meeting.

The board will take formal action to approve the policy in accordance with its bylaws. Once the board formally adopts the policy the committee will ensure that it is distributed widely so as to ensure implementation. The board must also monitor the school's adherence to stated policy and review them on a regular basis to ensure that they have not become unclear or out of date.

The policy amendment process will follow the process described herein.

The Executive Committee will also facilitate effective decision-making by planning the agenda of board meetings, making decisions for the full board when decisions cannot

## C. Operations Plan

wait until the next regular board meeting, and fostering communication between board members in-between regular meetings.

### **C.2.6 Describe the relationship of the Board of Directors to the school's administrative structure and staff, and to the parents, and students, as well as the LEA.**

#### Board Relationship with Principal and Staff

The board of directors will focus on matters of governance and delegate administration and management to the charter school administrator who in turn will delegate to other staff. Because of the limited amount of time usually available for board decision making, the board will place priority on major actions and decisions such as monitoring student achievement, evaluating the effectiveness of the educational program and other objectives outlined in the charter, setting the school's budget, strategic planning, school-wide policies, reviewing the principal's performance and recruiting and selecting new board members. The framework developed through this governance process will create a space for board committees, the principal and staff, and non-board volunteers to plan and implement the school's educational programs and support services and allow the board to remain focused on major policy and decision-making.

The principal will be responsible for the day to day operation of the school, including implementing the educational programs and strategic plan and overseeing compliance with laws, regulations and policies. The principal will also work with the faculty to identify instructional support needs and professional development opportunities. Because the principal serves as a member of the board, he or she will be present at board meetings, will be involved in committee work and will otherwise have regular and meaningful interaction with other board directors.

#### Board Relationship with Parents and Students

By encouraging students' parents or guardians to serve on our charter school board, head

Mountain Maryland Public Charter School application

September 1, 2010

Page 113

## C. Operations Plan

committees and participate in the life of our school, MMPCS will be a true community of learning in which our families are valued as partners in promoting learning.

Involving parents, families and students in the life of the school is critical to MMPCS' success. The Board recognizes that a child's education is a responsibility shared by the school and family during the entire period the child spends in school and that MMPCS and parents must collaborate as partners to achieve a shared vision of the educational success of their children. To that end, the board will implement the Plan for Parent Involvement attached hereto, which encourages parents' active support of their own child's learning, supports parental involvement in school governance and decision making, and solicits high levels of parent volunteerism.

### Board Relationship with LEA

Our board will work closely with ACPS. The board will maintain communication with ACPS' board and administration through its designated personnel such as the Charter School Liaison. Our board recognizes the school's role in a county-wide public school district and will maintain the collaborative relationship necessary to meet the needs of students across Allegany County and serve as a public education partner with ACPS.

### **C.2.7 Describe how Board of Directors will work collaboratively with local school board to provide proper delivery of proposed school program.**

The board of directors has pursued a collaborative and cooperative relationship with ACPS throughout our research and application process. Numerous meetings with the office of the Charter School Liaison and other district administrators have proven productive and collegial. The board will continue to cultivate this professional collaboration by engaging in open and reciprocal communication through a variety of means, timely delivery of required student and operations information, and participation in district-wide trainings and meetings as appropriate.

## C. Operations Plan

In addition, MMPCS plans to provide timely and comprehensive information for the planning and delivery of services contracted with ACPS such as food services, transportation and special education. It is the board's view that building a successful academic program requires a firm commitment to a productive and collegial partnership with ACPS' administration and service providers.

### C.3 Administrative Structure

**C.3.1. Administrative Structure: Describe the administrative structure of the school. Describe the nature and extent of teacher, parent, and student input to decisions that affect the school.**

#### Administrative Structure

MMPCS will be light on administration. The principal will be responsible for daily operations, instructional leadership and student achievement. By remaining a small school with strong parent involvement, our principal will be able to focus on carrying out the mission of MMPCS. Tasks and school-wide projects ancillary to the school's mission will be coordinated by parent-led committees with the principal and board's oversight.

#### Teacher Input

MMPCS' light administrative structure will promote a democratic school culture wherein teachers' voices will be heard and the school and board can be easily responsive.

Teachers will also be represented on the board of directors by the Teacher Representative who will have equal voting power with other board directors.

#### Parent and Student Input

Parents' involvement and participation is critical to their student's educational success.

The Plan for Parent Involvement encourages parents' active support of their own child's learning, supports parental involvement in school governance and decision making, and solicits high levels of parent volunteerism. The Plan implements the following programs

Mountain Maryland Public Charter School application

September 1, 2010

Page 115

### C. Operations Plan

and practices which promote and support the highest levels of parent involvement and input in the school:

- Parents will be represented on the board of directors which is the major policy and decision-making body for MMPCS.
- At least two times a year, an All School Community Forum will convene to provide all parents, students and community members an opportunity to express their opinions on major policy matters that the Board of Directors and Principal will be considering or should be considering in the future.
- Anonymous surveys of parents will be conducted at least once a year to gather customer feedback on school policy and operations, the effectiveness of the educational program, usefulness and accessibility of health and social services, and in general, to "listen to customer."
- Parents will be involved in quarterly conferences where the Principal and teachers will solicit their feedback on school policy and operations, the effectiveness of the educational program, and the usefulness and accessibility of health and social services. Parents will also be encouraged to voice concerns with regard to any other issue facing their child.
- MMPCS will also link parents to the school by utilizing a variety of technologies including a website and email. Parents will be encouraged to provide express concerns and offer feedback on school policy and operations, the effectiveness of the educational program, and the usefulness and accessibility of health and social services.

MMPCS will ultimately serve grades K-8. When appropriate, a student, selected by the MMPCS student council, shall serve as the Student Representative with equal voting power on the Board of Directors.

## C. Operations Plan

**C.3.2 Rules and Policies: Provide a statement describing the school’s intent to follow the local school districts rules and policies. If a waiver will be requested, discuss the rationale and submit the rules and policies for governance and operation of the public charter school that differ from existing school district rules and policies. If rules and policies are not yet in place, describe the process, timetable, and philosophy under which they will be developed.**

Where applicable, and except as otherwise indicated herein, MMPCS intends to follow the rules and policies of ACPS. In accordance with local policy IHBF, Section F(2), MMPCS requests the following waivers:

1. Waiver from local policy EEA, Student Transportation which provides that elementary students living more than one (1) mile from the school or bus stop are eligible for transportation services and secondary (middle and high) students living more than one and one half (1.5) miles from the school or bus stop are eligible for transportation services.
  - a. Because MMPCS is requesting a waiver from the ACPS School Attendance Area Policy (JC), MMPCS intends to work with families and transportation providers to ensure that every enrolled student has safe and reliable transportation to school every school day regardless of their attendance area.
  - b. Students whose IEPs or 504s designate specific transportation accommodations for accessibility and safety such as wheelchair lifts or tie-downs that cannot be met through existing transportation options, will receive contract transportation services as indicated by their IEP/504 plans.
  
2. Waiver from local policy DJB, Purchasing, which mandates that the superintendent or designee(s) shall approve in writing all contracts for the procurement of goods and services for the Allegany County Public Schools

### C. Operations Plan

and that no contract entered into by the Allegany County Public Schools will be valid without the written approval of the superintendent or his/her designee.

- a. Unless MMPCS obtains goods and services directly from ACPS it will not be subject to any state or local procurement regulations, policies or procedures regarding procurement except auditing.
  - b. MMPCS will develop and submit a procurement policy modeled on best practice standards for Maryland non-profit entities and will do its best to obtain equipment and service for the lowest responsible price. However MMPCS will need to obtain supplies and resources quickly and economically. It should not be subject to the same procurement requirements and procedures that apply to a large centralized school system. The necessity to contain costs will promote the best use of funds to provide the supplies and services it needs to operate. This waiver will allow MMPCS to procure resources in alignment with its approved educational program and will enable the school to address student need in a timely manner.
3. Waiver from local policy IHBF, Public Charter Schools, Section C(1)The superintendent retains the authority to assign and transfer educators as the needs of the system require and as negotiated in the Charter Agreement.
- a. MMPCS shall be able to recruit and select its own principal, teachers and clerical personnel, subject to final approval of the superintendent, provided said approval shall not be unreasonably withheld. It is imperative that MMPCS be allowed freedom and autonomy to recruit and select the principal and teachers who will be responsible for implementing its mission, vision and educational programs. Selecting the principal and teachers will be one of the most critical decisions made by MMPCS and will insure its academic success.

## C. Operations Plan

4. Waiver from local policy IHBF, Section C(2) that a member of the professional staff assigned at a public charter school shall hold the appropriate Maryland certification.
  - a. MMPCS will hire the best person for the job. The students and staff will be well served by the hiring of highly motivated, well qualified, dedicated educators. This may require the autonomy to hire highly qualified educators who have not yet been state certified.
  
5. Waiver from local policy IHBF, Sections C(3) and (4) that employees at a public charter school are public school employees, as defined in §§ 6-401(d) and 6-501(f) of the Education Article, *Annotated Code of Maryland* and shall have all rights contained therein and are in the bargaining unit(s) with other public school employees in similar job classifications and are entitled to the salaries, benefits and working conditions in the existing negotiated agreement for their job classification.
  - a. Other than lead teachers, MMPCS will be allowed to hire its own staff, through its non-profit operator. This will allow for flexibility and autonomy for employees who are not full time classroom teachers. This choice will give MMPCS freedom to employ innovative and successful models for staffing. It allows MMPCS to hire highly qualified, non-traditional staff. It allows MMPCS to supervise and evaluate staff based on our unique model. This waiver will allow greater alignment between staffing and the educational program which will positively impact the students and families that are served.
  
6. Waiver from local policy IHBF, Section E(1)(a) that the tuition paid by a non-resident student accepted for enrollment at MMPCS will be paid to the Allegany County Public School System and that funding provided by the school system to the public charter school for that student will be calculated in the same manner as for all other students attending the public charter school.

## C. Operations Plan

- a. Students whose primary residence is outside of Allegany County, Maryland are free to apply to enroll and, if admitted, pay tuition at the current annual ACPS per pupil rate. These students will be admitted after all applicants on the Sibling Waiting List and General Waiting List has been offered admission. Based on its mission and innovative educational program, MMPCS expects to receive applications from non-resident students. Tuition paid on behalf of those students should be paid directly to MMPCS.
7. Waiver from local policy IHBF, Section E(3) that requires that a random selection process must be used if the number of eligible applicants exceeds the predetermined student capacity in the public charter school as agreed upon in the approved charter application.
    - a. This waiver will allow MMPCS to adopt the common charter school practice of exempting certain categories of applicants from the lottery and admitting them automatically. Enrollment priority shall be given to children and siblings of founders and teachers, currently enrolled students whose parents timely submitted the Re-Enrollment form and siblings of students admitted to or attending MMPCS. This policy is allowed pursuant to the Federal Charter Schools Program (CSP) non-regulatory guidance amended in June 2007 which is found in the Federal Charter School Program Title V, Part B, Non-Regulatory Guidance. See <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/cspguidance03.doc>.
    - b. This waiver will enable those who have worked hard to bring MMPCS into existence to enroll their own children. For teachers it encourages those who work at the school to have the benefit of an alternative education for their own children and will facilitate loyalty as well as a positive model for the community. This will be a great benefit to teachers who desire to improve their child's school as well as to serve the children of the community.

## C. Operations Plan

- c. In accordance with the CSP guidance, once a student has been admitted to MMPCS, he or she may remain in attendance through subsequent grades. School-aged siblings of students admitted to or attending MMPCS will also be given priority as the MMPCS Board recognizes the importance to families that siblings attend the same school.
  
8. Waiver from local policy JC, School Attendance Areas which provides that a student shall attend the school designated to serve the attendance area in which he/she resides unless he/she has been granted special permission by the superintendent of schools to attend a school in another attendance area in Allegany County.
  - a. As a county-wide public charter school, MMPCS seeks to reduce barriers to students' participation in a program of choice. Therefore, the application process will be open to all students regardless of their ACPS attendance area. No preference will be made to students based on place of residence.
  
9. Waiver from local policy EF, Food Services, which provides that Allegany County Public Schools will operate a food service program in compliance with the regulations and guidelines adopted by National School Lunch Program, the Maryland State Department of Education, and the Allegany County Health Department and that the Supervisor of Food Service will coordinate with school principals, the proper functioning of the food service program in each school.
  - a. MMPCS will become a school food authority and will implement an innovative lunch program. Students and staff will be able to participate in a lunch program designed for our school. The program will be based on innovative models aligned with the latest nutritional guidelines and research. MMPCS will form partnerships with local

## C. Operations Plan

farms and other local organizations whose missions align with and support the MMPCS school meal program.

### **C.3.3 Student Policies and Procedures**

**C.3.3.a Timetable for Recruiting and Registering: Describe the calendar to be used for recruiting and registering students, including the cutoff date for accepting applications and the timetable for a lottery, if needed.**

#### Recruitment and Registration

Admission to MMPCS shall be open to all students residing in Allegany County eligible to attend the grades provided by MMPCS. Admission will not be denied to any student based on factors such as race, ethnicity, national origin, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender, disabling condition, proficiency in the English language, religion, or intellectual or athletic ability. MMPCS shall actively recruit and encourage student applicants from a wide cross-section of the Allegany County community with the aim of including, to the extent possible, a level of racial, ethnic, student ability, and socio-economic diversity that closely approximates that of the ACPS system as a whole. To achieve this goal and to maximize the potential positive impact of MMPCS on the enrollment conditions in county schools and, additionally, to have a beneficial financial effect on the schools whose enrollments are affected by MMPCS, weighted lotteries and active recruitment will occur when necessary.

For the first year of operations, the open application period for the school will begin December 1, 2010 and close on February 25, 2011. Community-based registration events will be held during this period.

Community level outreach has begun and will continue throughout the enrollment period. MMPCS will use the following recruitment methods to disseminate information concerning the additional educational choice our school provides to the students and parents of Allegany County.

### C. Operations Plan

- MMPCS will develop promotional and informational materials concerning the school's mission and scope, the dates and times of our outreach meetings, and application and enrollment timelines and procedures.
- MMPCS will distribute these materials to a broad variety of community groups and agencies that serve the various groups and neighborhoods that reflect the diversity of the county. MMPCS will distribute materials at a broad variety of community settings, including churches, public elementary schools, libraries, recreation centers, local businesses, community events, such as Farmers' Markets, Canal Fest, Appalachian Festival, child-care centers, nursery schools, and other appropriate places.
- MMPCS will publicize these materials through a variety of media including local newspapers and publications, radio broadcasts, and various Internet websites of interest to county residents.
- MMPCS will actively seek opportunities to speak at local PTA meetings to familiarize parents of all public school children with our school as well as at any other community group meetings attended by parents of prospective students.
- Outreach meetings will be held on different dates, at a variety of times, and children's activities will be provided so all parents can attend, despite irregular work hours or a lack of child care.
- MMPCS will establish a mailing list in order to send an introductory letter and newsletters to interested families to ensure they remain informed of MMPCS' application and enrollment schedules and other important developments and information.
- MMPCS canvass neighborhoods with high concentrations of targeted students.

MMPCS will begin recruitment of students following submission of the MMPCS application to ACPS . Recruitment will continue throughout the lifetime of the school.

## C. Operations Plan

Applications will be accepted until the last day of the enrollment period. If the enrollment period has closed and there are openings with no waiting list, students who apply after the enrollment period will be admitted on a first come first serve basis. If the number of children intending to enroll in MMPCS exceeds the number of available spaces, students will be selected for admission by random lottery. Parents/guardians will complete a MMPCS Application form for each child they wish to be considered for the Lottery.

### Lottery Timetable

The Lottery will take place on March 1<sup>st</sup> by the MMPCS Board of Directors. Parents of newly accepted students will be notified by telephone call and first class mail by March 7<sup>th</sup>. Parents/guardians must inform MMPCS of final decision to attend MMPCS by officially enrolling their child/ren. To officially enroll, parents/guardians must submit all necessary enrollment forms by March 31<sup>st</sup>. If the above-mentioned forms are not completed and submitted and the child/children are not officially enrolled by March 31<sup>st</sup>, they will be relinquishing the slot for that school year. That slot will then be filled by the next eligible student on the Sibling Waiting List. If there are no students on the Sibling Waiting List, the spot will be filled by the next eligible student on the General Waiting List. If the family would like to attend MMPCS in subsequent years, they must begin the admission process over again, starting with completing an application and going through the lottery for available spaces.

Parents on the Sibling Waiting List and General Waiting List will be notified by telephone call and first class mail of admission as soon as a space is available. Parents will then have one week from the date of the offer to notify MMPCS of the decision to enroll the student by submitting all necessary enrollment forms. If the above mentioned forms are not completed and submitted within one week, the parent/guardian will be relinquishing the slot for that school year and would have to go back to the General Lottery in subsequent years.

## C. Operations Plan

In the event that there are spaces available, students who are not residents of Allegany County may be admitted pursuant to applicable ACPS policies on tuition and admission of non-resident students.

Anticipated completion date of each grade level class list is April 30, 2011. However, full compliance with state enrollment and admissions procedures may necessitate additional time to complete grade level rosters.

**C.3.3.b Policies and Procedures for Selection, Admission and Enrollment: Describe procedures for conducting a lottery for random selection of students. Describe the procedures that will guide the admission and enrollment, including verification of district residency. Describe policy on enrollment for nonresident students and for siblings.**

General Policies:

MMPCS is committed to diversity and equality. MMPCS is open to all children residing in Allegany County on a space available basis within each grade level. Admissions will not be limited based upon race, ethnicity, national origin, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender, disabling condition, proficiency in the English language, religion, or intellectual or athletic ability. There will be no tuition or fees charged for attending the charter school.

Enrolling families will be expected to be familiar with and support the mission and vision of the school. It will be strongly recommend that interested families attend an open house/informational session and school tour before completing an enrollment form. These sessions will be held prior to the enrollment deadline. In order to accommodate working families, both evening and daytime sessions will be made available.

Because of their effort in founding the school, Founders' children will be given preference over the Sibling Waiting List and General Waiting List and exempted from the lottery. Founding Board Members must enroll their students by the 2016 academic

### C. Operations Plan

year or forfeit founders' preference privileges. (See Appendix III - Founder's Agreement). There are 9 official founding families with children of MMPCS.

If the number of applicants exceeds the capacity of the school at any grade level, enrollment will be determined by public random lottery for that grade level. MMPCS will give enrollment preference to pupils returning to the charter school in the second or any subsequent year of its operation and to siblings of pupils already enrolled in the charter school. The sibling of any current student is placed at the top of the waiting list for their grade, behind any applicants with founder preferences.

#### Application and Enrollment Procedure:

The following enrollment policy will be in place for all school years except the initial operating year beginning September 2011 due to possible time limitations resulting from granting of the charter and finalizing the charter contract and the start of the academic year. However, these policies will guide the registration and enrollment period prior to the first year of operations although circumstances may require extended enrollment dates.

Applications will be accepted until the last day of the enrollment period, February 25, 2011. If the enrollment period has closed and there are openings with no waiting list, students who apply after the enrollment period will be admitted on a first come first serve basis.

#### Currently Enrolled Students:

Currently enrolled students are placed on the class roster for the next academic year upon submission of the Re-enrollment Form. Re-enrollment forms must be submitted no later than the last day of the enrollment period. Currently enrolled student's whose Re-enrollment forms are received before the deadline, will neither be placed on the waiting list nor placed in the lottery.

#### Sibling Preference:

Mountain Maryland Public Charter School application  
September 1, 2010  
Page 126

### C. Operations Plan

At MMPCS, the importance of families having siblings attend the same school is understood. Therefore, siblings are given preference in the enrollment process.

A sibling is defined as any natural child, adopted child, stepchild, or legal foster child actually residing in the household of the parent/guardian who has completed the application for MMPCS. Cousins, nieces, nephews, and unrelated children sharing the same address with the applicant are not considered siblings.

Newly school-aged siblings of currently enrolled students or of students who graduated from MMPCS' eighth grade in no more than two academic years prior to the younger siblings Kindergarten eligibility are exempt from the wait list and lottery. Applicants listed on the Sibling Waiting List will be offered admission before new applicants are offered admission. Parents must complete a separate Enrollment Form for each child. If a separate form is not received for each child, siblings of admitted students will not qualify for the Sibling Preference Policy.

#### Lottery Procedures:

If the number of children intending to enroll in MMPCS exceeds the number of available spaces, students will be selected for admission by random lottery. Parents/guardians will complete an Application form for each child they wish to be considered for the Lottery. The Lottery will take place on March 1<sup>st</sup> by the MMPCS Board of Directors. All applications from each family will be placed into one envelope and sealed. All envelopes will be placed into a bin. Envelopes will be randomly drawn and numbered by the order in which they were drawn. The process will continue until all envelopes have been drawn and numbered.

Spaces will be offered to families in the order of names drawn. Starting with family number one, if there is a space available in the grade level(s) needed for that/those child/children, they will be placed accordingly. Once a family name is drawn and there is space available for at least one child, the entire family is deemed to have been admitted to MMPCS. If there are no available slot(s) in the grade level needed, the student(s) will be placed either on the General Waiting List or the Sibling Waiting List.

### C. Operations Plan

If a family name is drawn and there are no available slots for any family members, those children will all be placed on the General Waiting List. If a slot becomes available for any member of the family, the remaining siblings are then moved to the Sibling Waiting List.

If a family has more than one child and there is a slot for one and not the others, the remaining children will be placed on the Sibling Waiting List. The names on the Sibling Waiting List will take preference for admission over the names on the General Waiting List. Sibling Preference is dependent on available space and does not guarantee enrollment for each sibling.

Children of employees teaching at MMPCS shall be exempted from any lottery while that employee is assigned to MMPCS. The General Waiting list will be cleared for each new enrollment period.

#### Notice of Admission Procedures:

Families whose children are accepted will be notified by March 7. Notice of admission will be made by mailings, e-mail and phone contact beginning on March 2 for the following September. Families who are accepted at the time of the lottery have until March 31 to enroll their child by completing the enrollment packet. Enrollments not received by that date will forfeit their acceptance into the school and that student's seat will be filled by the next student on the same-grade waiting list. All other students will be placed on a waiting list in the same order that they were drawn. Those families will be notified that they are on the waiting list. Families on the waiting list are notified of acceptance as openings occur in the order in which they were drawn in the lottery. Applications received after February 28 will be added to the end of the waiting list in the order received.

#### Out-of-attendance area placements

As a county-wide public charter school, MMPCS seeks to reduce barriers to students' participation in a program of choice. Therefore, the application process will be open to

### C. Operations Plan

all students regardless of their ACPS attendance area. No preference will be made to students based on place of residence.

#### Out-of-county/out-of-state enrollment

Students whose primary residence is outside of Allegany County, Maryland are free to apply to enroll and, if admitted, pay tuition at the current annual ACPS per pupil rate. These students will be admitted after all applicants on the Sibling Waiting List and General Waiting List has been offered admission.

#### Verification of district residency

Parents or guardians will be required to verify district residency in accordance with the ACPS policy concerning documentation of student attendance revised March 2006. Pursuant to that policy students will be considered residents if they live with a parent or guardian who resides in Allegany County or reside in another county/state but attend school in Allegany County under a cooperative agreement, reside in another county/state but are placed in a foster care home or residential facility in Allegany County by an out-of-county/state agency which is financially responsible for the student's education, are temporarily living in Allegany County with someone other than a parent or legal guardian for the primary purpose of attending public school (this should be determined on an individual basis); are living in Allegany County with someone other than a parent or legal guardian for reasons other than the primary purpose of attending public school in Allegany County and may be attending school under a MSDE approved program which provides for waiver of tuition, and students determined to be homeless pursuant to 42 U.S.C. Section 11302.

Proof of bona fide residency will be required each time a student enrolls or re-enrolls at MMPCS, or upon the request of the school. Acceptable documentation that provide proof of residency include the following: current rental lease/agreement; current utility bill with applicant's name and address; insurance bill with applicant's name and address; statement from bank or other credit institution; first class mail/document from government agency excluding licenses; in instances where the owner/lessee of the home

## C. Operations Plan

where the child lives is not the parent/guardian of the child, the owner/lessee shall provide a signed, notarized affidavit verifying that the child resides at that address plus one of the proofs of residence listed above.

**C.3.3.c Policies and Procedures for Withdrawal, Suspension, and Expulsion of Students: Provide a statement that describes adherence to COMAR (Code of Maryland Regulations) and local school district's policies and procedures regarding suspension, expulsion, and other disciplinary actions for the proposed school, and the criteria for making decisions on such matters. If requesting a waiver, describe rationale and provide corresponding policies and procedures. Address policy for students with special needs.**

MMPCS intends to follow the policies and procedures for withdrawal, suspension, and expulsion of students in accordance with Education Article Section 7, Subtitle 3, Annotated Code of Maryland, and all relevant COMAR sections, including, but not limited to: 13A.08.01.07, Student Withdrawal Status; 13A.08.01.11, Disciplinary Action; 13A.08.01.12, Arrests on School Premises; 13A.08.01.12-1, Bringing or Possessing a Firearm on School Property; 13A.08.01.13, Questioning on School Premises; 13A.08.01.14, Searches; 13A.08.01.15, Reporting Delinquent Acts; 13A.08.01.17, School Use of Reportable Offenses; 13A.08.03, Discipline of Students with Disabilities; 13A.08.04, Student Behavior Interventions; and 13A.08.06, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support Program.

MMPCS will employ ACPS' code of conduct as its behavior standards and all actions involving discipline/consequences, behavior review, intervention and follow up will be consistent with ACPS policies and procedures, including, but not limited to: JK, Student Discipline; JBA, Student Harassment, Intimidation, Violence; JICH, Substance Abuse by Students; JICI, Weapons in School; JIH, Student Interrogations/Searches/Arrests; EEAEAC, Student Conduct on the Bus;

## C. Operations Plan

Students with special needs who demonstrate behaviors detrimental to themselves, other students or adults or behaviors that adversely affect other students' learning opportunities in MMPCS learning environments including after-school and extra-curricular programs, community-based research outings and other school related activities, will be referred to the Student Support Team (SST). (See Section B.2.4) Should the student continue to demonstrate behavioral difficulties following implementation of the SST procedures, the SST may recommend convening a team meeting to review the student's IEP or 504 Plan and identify additional strategies to support the student's successful participation in MMPCS programming.

### **C.3.4 Human Resources Information**

#### C.3.4 Human Resources Information

Building a strong professional educational team is similar to building a great choral group: each individual must be a strong contributor and all the voices must complement one another. Therefore, MMPCS is requesting a waiver of local policy IHBF, Section C(2) and Education Article Sections 9-108(a), 6-401(d), 6-501(f), 4-103(a), and 4-311 to allow autonomy in hiring to build a cohesive and collaborative team of talented educators whose career visions align with the MMPCS vision and mission. Details of waiver requests regarding educational staff are found in Sections C.3.2 and C.8.4

#### **C.3.4.a Key Leadership Roles**

##### Principal

MMPCS operations, administration and educational programming will be overseen by the MMPCS Principal with the support of the administrative assistant. The MMPCS Principal will cooperate with ACPS staff and personnel to coordinate contract services as defined by the terms of the charter contract. The MMPCS Principal will communicate and cooperate with ACPS in accordance with the Decision Making Matrix (Appendix X).

**The MMPCS Principal will be a 12-month position. Qualified applicants will meet the following criteria:**

Mountain Maryland Public Charter School application  
September 1, 2010  
Page 131

### C. Operations Plan

- Master's degree or higher in education
- Maryland certified or eligible for the same
- Maryland Administration and Supervisory Certified or eligible for same
- Extensive experience in teaching, leadership and curriculum design
- Commitment to the MMPCS vision, mission and goals
- Demonstrated belief in teacher empowerment
- Demonstrated ability to create strong relationships with students and their families
- Enthusiasm and commitment to innovative educational programming
- Demonstrated balance between great flexibility and great organization
- Creativity, compassion and intelligence

#### Responsibilities:

The Principal of MMPCS is the leader of the MMPCS school community. The MMPCS Principal will be responsible for promoting a school culture that encourages communication, collegiality and inquiry. The MMPCS Principal must also support parents' involvement in school life and provide leadership in building a collaborative learning community. As the strongest teacher in the building, the MMPCS Principal will provide instructional support to all staff and develop relationships with every student at MMPCS.

The MMPCS Principal must be organized, professional and approachable, creative, flexible and have strong communication skills.

Duties required of the Principal include strategic planning, budgeting, facilities management, scheduling staff development and supervision and evaluation of staff. The MMPCS Principal will also be expected to participate in Board level governance. The Principal is responsible for student achievement and progress toward school goals.

## C. Operations Plan

The Principal will be evaluated by the board of directors. As stipulated in the by-laws, the Principal will be a voting board member except in matters related to his/her performance and salary reviews. As the school leader, the Principal is responsible for student achievement, building an inclusive and responsive school community and promoting teacher's professional growth. The Principal's evaluation will be based on data regarding student achievement, parent and teacher satisfaction and the Board's assessment of the Principal's performance in carrying out the school mission and vision.

### Recruitment

In order to hire a highly qualified candidate as early as possible, recruitment for the Principal will begin prior to the completion of the MMPCS charter contract. Recruitment activities will include advertisements in print and on-line postings, job fairs, networking with university graduate programs, and networking with the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance and progressive schools nationwide.

### School Administration

In order to concentrate resources on educational programming and instructional support, MMPCS has been designed with a very simple administrative structure. Business and administrative functions will be carried out by the Principal with support from the Administrative Assistant. The Board of Directors will provide additional support as indicated in the Decision Making Matrix (Appendix X). Financial records will be kept by a licensed and insured bookkeeper with whom MMPCS' Board of Directors will contract. Legal counsel will be provided by MMPCS' Board Vice-Chair, Jennifer Walsh Hare, who is recognized locally as the leading expert in charter school law.

### **C.3.4.b Qualifications of School Staff**

## C. Operations Plan

All MMPCS educators will meet the standards set for highly qualified teachers under No Child Left Behind.

### **Elementary/Middle School Teachers**

The MMPCS Teachers will have a 10-month duty year. Qualified applicants will meet the following criteria:

- Maryland certified or eligible for the same
- Ability/experience in project-based learning and differentiation of instruction
- Shared vision of MMPCS and desire to implement the mission/goals of MMPCS
- Commitment to professional development and professional collaboration
- A belief in the potential, curiosity, and creativity of all children
- Demonstrated commitment to inclusion and diversity of all kinds
- Demonstrated reflective teaching practices
- Commitment to mission-driven innovative educational practice
- Interest in arts integration, professional development through reflective practice and mentoring and incorporating research into teaching practice
- Demonstrated ability to take leadership roles and work collaboratively with colleagues, students and students' family members
- Willingness to assume an additional school wide responsibility to carry out MMPCS mission

### Responsibilities:

- Participate in the development of a safe, supportive and collaborative learning environment
- Work collaboratively with and supervise classroom Instructional Assistant to assign appropriate responsibilities in classroom activities
- Implement the MMPCS mission and education program
- Conduct regular individual and group meetings with parents/guardians to discuss student's progress
- Establish student learning goals, assessing and reporting progress

### C. Operations Plan

- Establish open communication with parents regarding student progress
- Participate in planning, evaluation and collaborative meetings with co-workers.
- Participating in professional development
- Participation in building a community of learners
- Assuming school-wide leadership roles to support achievement of MMPCS mission and goals

#### **Instructional Assistants**

- Maryland certified or eligible for the same
- Associate's degree or equivalent credits or experience
- Ability/experience in project-based learning and differentiation of instruction
- Shared vision of MMPCS and desire to implement the mission/goals of MMPCS
- Commitment to professional development and professional collaboration
- A belief in the potential, curiosity, and creativity of all children
- Demonstrated capacity for reflective teaching practice
- Commitment to mission-driven innovative educational practice
- Interest in arts integration, professional development through reflective practice and mentoring and incorporating research into teaching practice
- Demonstrated ability to take leadership roles and work collaboratively with colleagues, students and students' family members
- Willingness to assume an additional school-wide responsibility to carry out MMPCS mission
- Demonstrated commitment to inclusion and diversity of all kinds

#### Responsibilities:

- Participate in the development of a safe, supportive and collaborative learning environment
- Implement the MMPCS mission and education program

### C. Operations Plan

- Conduct regular individual and group meetings with parents/guardians to discuss student's progress
- Establish student learning goals, assessing and reporting progress
- Establish open communication with parents regarding student progress
- Participate in planning, evaluation and collaborative meetings with co-workers.
- Participate in professional development
- Participate in building a community of learners
- Assume school-wide leadership roles to support achievement of MMPCS mission and goals

### **Art Teacher**

The MMPCS Art Teacher will have a 10-month duty year. Qualified applicants will meet the following criteria:

- Maryland certified or eligible for the same
- Ability/experience in project-based learning and differentiation of instruction
- Share vision of MMPCS and desire to implement the mission/goals of MMPCS
- Commitment to professional development and professional collaboration
- A belief in the potential, curiosity, and creativity of all children
- Demonstrated commitment to inclusion and diversity of all kinds
- Demonstrated reflective teaching practices
- Commitment to mission-driven innovative educational practice
- Interest in arts integration, professional development through reflective practice and mentoring and incorporating research into teaching practice
- Demonstrated ability to take leadership roles and work collaboratively with colleagues, students and students' family members
- Willingness to assume an additional school wide responsibility to carry out MMPCS mission

### Responsibilities:

- Participate in the development of a safe, supportive and collaborative learning environment

### C. Operations Plan

- Implement the MMPCS mission and education program
- Develop project documentation activities based on push-in model
- Conduct regular individual and group meetings with parents/guardians to discuss student's progress
- Establish student learning goals, assessing and reporting progress
- Establish open communication with parents regarding student progress
- Participate in planning, evaluation and collaborative meetings with co-workers.
- Participate in professional development
- Participate in building a community of learners
- Assume school-wide leadership roles to support achievement of MMPCS mission and goals

#### **Physical Education/Movement Teacher (Part time)**

##### Qualifications:

- Maryland certified or eligible for the same
- Ability/experience/interest in project-based learning and differentiation of instruction
- Commitment to professional development and professional collaboration
- A belief in the potential, curiosity, and creativity of all children
- Demonstrated commitment to inclusion and diversity of all kinds
- Demonstrated reflective teaching practices
- Commitment to mission-driven innovative educational practice
- Interest in arts integration, professional development through reflective practice and mentoring and incorporating research into teaching practice
- Demonstrated ability to take leadership roles and work collaboratively with colleagues, students and students' family members
- Willingness to assume an additional school wide responsibility to carry out MMPCS mission

##### Responsibilities:

### C. Operations Plan

- Participate in the development of a safe, supportive and collaborative learning environment
- Implement the MMPCS mission and education program
- Participate in the development of a safe, supportive and collaborative learning environment
- Develop a physical education/movement, health and nutrition program, and working collaboratively with staff members to integrate learning objectives into project curriculum
  - Conduct regular individual and group meetings with parents/guardians to discuss student's progress
    - Establish student learning goals, assessing and reporting progress
    - Establish open communication with parents regarding student progress
    - Participate in planning, evaluation and collaborative meetings with co-workers.
    - Participate in professional development
    - Participate in building a community of learners
    - Assume school-wide leadership roles to support achievement of MMPCS mission and goals

#### **Administrative Assistant (12 months)**

The MMPCS Administrative Assistant will be a 12-month position. Qualified applicants will meet the following criteria:

#### Qualifications:

- Strong experience/interest in work setting with school aged children
- Experience in business management, accounting and student records
- Knowledge and expertise in general accounting and bookkeeping
- Basic knowledge of office technology
- Excellent organizational and communication skills
- Shared vision of the MMPCS mission and goals
- Demonstrated commitment to diverse, inclusive and open learning community

### C. Operations Plan

- Demonstrated professionalism, flexibility, initiative and problem-solving skills

#### Responsibilities:

- Participate in the development of a safe, supportive and collaborative learning environment
- Ensuring the office of the school is run in an efficient, friendly and accountable manner
- Receiving phone calls and forwarding to the appropriate party as needed
- Ensuring all classes are covered by appropriate staff and arranging for substitute teachers as needed
- Supervise the operation and maintenance of the school facility and arranging for repairs as necessary
- Complete tasks as directed by the Principal as related to school operations, internal and external communication
- Communicating with parents, students and faculty in a manner that supports school mission and goals of open communication and parent participation

### **Health Service Coordinator (Part-time)**

#### Qualifications:

- Certified Registered Nurse
- Experience working with children and families
- Shared vision of MMPCS and a desire to implement the mission/goals of MMPCS
- Experience in nutrition and school health issues
- Commitment to professional development and professional collaboration
- A belief in the potential, curiosity, and creativity of all children
- Demonstrated commitment to inclusion and diversity of all kinds

#### Responsibilities:

- Maintain student health records, vision and hearing screenings, notification of local or county officials of any improperly immunized students

### C. Operations Plan

- Support school culture conducive to the physical and mental well being of students.
- Consult as needed in developing healthy school lunch program

#### Recruitment

In order to identify highly qualified candidates as early as possible, recruitment for faculty and staff will begin prior to the completion of the MMPCS charter contract. Recruitment activities will include advertisements in print and on-line postings, job fairs, networking with university graduate programs, and networking with the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance and progressive schools nationwide.

In order to recruit teachers who share the MMPCS vision, the interview process will be an essential component of recruitment. Candidates will be evaluated on the goodness of fit between their professional vision and the MMPCS vision, their qualifications and the interview team members' assessment of candidate's potential to support the achievement of MMPCS mission and goals.

The hiring committee for the first year of operations will consist of board members and the principal. Hiring practices in subsequent years will involve a committee of teachers, the principal and board members as deemed necessary by the hiring committee.

#### **Community Programs Coordinator – Part time**

##### Qualifications

- Shared vision of MMPCS and desire to implement the mission/goals of MMPCS
- Commitment to professional development and professional collaboration
- Share a belief in the potential, curiosity, and creativity of all children
- Demonstrated commitment to inclusion and diversity of all kinds

### C. Operations Plan

- Demonstrated ability to take leadership roles and work collaboratively with colleagues, community partners students and students' family members
- Excellent communication and organization skills

#### Responsibilities

- Collaborate with MMPCS administration and faculty to identify and coordinate community resources for project research such as visiting experts and student field research
- Identify and cultivate partnerships between community leaders/organizations and the MMPCS community
- Identify opportunities for community partners' engagement in/support of MMPCS mission and goals
- Support MMPCS administration and faculty in the development of joint MMPCS-community partner programs
- Collaborate with MMPCS administration, faculty, Board and families to identify and coordinate opportunities and supports for family involvement in school life

#### Background Checks

All applicants for employment and school volunteers will undergo a criminal background investigation. No applicant for any school position paid or volunteer will be permitted to begin service until completion of criminal background clearance reports have been received, reviewed by the recruitment committee and placed on file.

Applicants for positions requiring MSDE certification will be required to submit the following forms:

- Application for Certificate from the Maryland State Department of Education
- Application for Criminal History Records Check from the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services.

Mountain Maryland Public Charter School application

September 1, 2010

Page 141

### C. Operations Plan

- Child Protective Services Background Clearance Form

These forms will be submitted by the MMPCS Principal's office to their respective state agencies. Background clearance reports will be kept in the applicant's personnel file.

Applicants for non-certified positions and school volunteers will be required to submit the following forms:

- Application for Criminal History Records Check from the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services.
- Child Protective Services Background Clearance Form

These forms will be submitted by the MMPCS Principal's office to their respective state agencies. Background clearance reports will be kept in the applicant's personnel file.

The MMPCS Principal will report relevant findings to the Office of the State Superintendent as mandated.

#### **C.3.4.c Staffing Plan**

MMPCS enrollment goal is 22 students per class. Each grade level will have one lead teacher and one instructional assistant. Therefore, at each grade level the pupil: teacher ratio will be 11:1.

In the arts integration model, the MMPCS art teacher will push-in to classroom activities to support student documentation of project learning. This practice will result in an even smaller pupil:teacher ratio of 7:1 during some project learning activities.

For classes such as physical education/movement and art, each grade level will be seen for one period with a maximum pupil: teacher ratio of 22:1.

#### **C.3.4.d Employment Policies**

## C. Operations Plan

Requested waivers are described in detail in Sections C.3.2 and C.8.4.

### **C.3.4.e Use of Volunteers**

MMPCS will encourage parents/guardians to volunteer in capacities which suit their interests, skills and experience. Volunteer opportunities will encourage parents/guardians to become involved in the life of the school and provide strong adult models of service and commitment to the learning community. Volunteers will fill essential roles such as chairing committees, providing ancillary support to educational programming and developing components of school operations.

Volunteers will be welcome to participate in a variety of support roles within the MMPCS community. Initial roles for volunteers may include participation on committees to develop play areas, a school garden, healthy eating practices at school or fundraising committee. Parent/guardians will also have opportunities to participate in supplemental educational programming such as after-school tutoring or as ancillary support to classroom teachers. Opportunities for family volunteers will be identified through family focus groups and school-wide surveys.

The Volunteer Training Program will be developed based on the needs identified in family focus groups. Training and assignments for volunteers will be coordinated by the Community Resource Coordinator, which will be a volunteer position. Supervision for volunteers will be based on the capacity in which the volunteer is serving. Volunteers will be interviewed and asked to complete the background check procedures (see C.3.4.b – “Background Check”) for non-certified personnel before beginning volunteer service. Additional details regarding family volunteers can be found in the (See Appendix XVI - Plan for Parent and Family Involvement)

### **C.3.4.f Use of Substitute Teachers**

MMPCS will keep a list of qualified substitute teachers to provide coverage for planned and un-planned teacher absences. Lists will include both qualified lead teacher

### C. Operations Plan

substitutes and qualified instructional assistant substitutes. Substitutes on both lists will be required to complete the requisite background checks before beginning service at MMPCS. Background clearances must be reviewed and on file at MMPCS prior to any substitute beginning service.

Qualified substitutes for lead teachers will have at least a Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university. Lead teacher substitutes will have experience working with children K-8. Lead teacher substitutes will be interviewed by the MMPCS Principal and complete required documents for a non-certified personnel background check. Decisions regarding selection of lead teacher substitutes will be made by the MMPCS Principal.

Qualified substitutes for instructional assistants will have at least an associates degree or a high school diploma with 3 years experience working with children in grades K-8. Instructional assistant substitutes will be interviewed by the MMPCS Principal and will complete required documents for a non-certified personnel background check.

Teachers will be asked to present requests for a planned absence for professional development or personal day to the Principal at least 5 school days prior to the requested date. Upon provisional approval by the Principal, the Administrative Assistant will then contact individuals from the Substitute List. Upon confirmation that a substitute is available for that day, final approval will be given.

For unplanned absences, teachers are asked to contact the Principal as soon as possible to afford the most planning time. The Principal will then direct the Administrative Assistant to contact appropriate individuals on the Substitute List to cover the teacher absence.

For a planned absence teachers will be asked to give clear direction to the Substitute Lead Teacher regarding the activities and lessons planned for the day. For unplanned absences, lead teachers should give as much information verbally, via e-mail or other mode of communication regarding planned activities, specific student needs and other relevant information to promote a productive school day for students.

## C. Operations Plan

### **C.4 Recruiting and Marketing**

**C.4.1 Outreach to the Community: Describe what has been done to publicize and market the school in the community the school plans to serve. If the school is approved, how will the outreach continue? Discuss how the school can become a resource to the community.**

MMPCS will use a multifaceted strategy to reach families from all Allegany County communities and keep families informed of school developments and enrollment opportunities.

The MMPCS website [[mountainmarylandpcs.org](http://mountainmarylandpcs.org)] will allow families to learn more about the school, view the MMPCS registration calendar and download necessary forms for registration. Efforts have also been made to raise awareness of MMPCS through social networking sites such as Facebook, community postings at the public libraries and prominent area employers.

Community-level outreach has begun and will continue throughout the initial open enrollment period ending February 25, 2011. To date, these efforts have included community-based petition drives, website publicity and networking among personal contacts. MMPCS plans to conduct neighborhood-based canvassing to inform families of up-coming registration opportunities.

MMPCS will maintain a presence at local events such as Canal Fest and Appalachian Festival to generate awareness and public interest in enrollment at MMPCS. At these events, information will be available on MMPCS' programming and registration events.

During the Fall of 2010, presentations throughout the county will be made to raise awareness of MMPCS' upcoming enrollment drive. Presentation opportunities include neighborhood associations, community service organizations, community councils, tenants' organizations, cultural organizations and places of worship.

## C. Operations Plan

Additional community outreach efforts will include providing information about MMPCS to local real estate agencies to be shared with potential homebuyers and new residents to the area. Print canvassing with flyers and other print materials will also be conducted in targeted neighborhoods, libraries and childcare centers throughout the county.

Upon granting of the charter, public notice of information and registration events will be made through the Cumberland Times-News events calendar, The Appalachian Independent on-line newspaper, press releases and in the community events calendar announcements on local radio.

Following completion of the charter contract, MMPCS would like to place a link to the MMPCS website on the Allegany County Public Schools homepage in order to demonstrate to the community the high-level partnership between MMPCS and ACPS and to showcase the vision and leadership of the Allegany County Board of Education.

MMPCS plans to become a resource to the community by carrying out its mission to challenge students to reach their academic potential and to create a community in which each student is known, respected and valued as an individual of great potential and promise. MMPCS is designed to enable educators to respond to the specific needs of students and to encourage them to reach their full potential. MMPCS will also be a resource for families who are seeking options for their children within the public education system and offering encouragement and support to families who wish to take an active role in the life of their children's school.

**C.4.2 Recruitment of Students: Describe plan to attract sufficient students to operate a school and effort to publicize the school to a broad audience in order to foster a student body representative of the local community. Include efforts that seek to ensure a match between the school program and applicants' educational and personal needs.**

MMPCS' marketing strategy is designed to reach a broad cross-section of the

## C. Operations Plan

community. The MMPCS Board envisions having a student body which reflects the unique diversity characteristic of Allegany County. To this end, the student recruitment drive will include print, media, and community-based events.

MMPCS' print campaign will include posting flyers in public places such supermarkets, libraries, childcare centers and local area businesses and announcements in local events calendars.

Community-based recruiting events will include door-to-door canvassing in targeted neighborhoods, conducting registration events at childcare centers and in collaboration with community service organizations such as the YMCA and Community Unity in Action among others. Registration events will be made accessible to parents by being held at parks and playgrounds, community playgroups and other family-centered locations and activities.

Brochures, applications, and registration information will be sent out to prospective parents. E-mail lists acquired through marketing efforts will be used to update families on recent developments and announcements. For families that don't have internet access print materials will be made available.

As part of the application process, MMPCS will make sure that families understand the school's program, so they can choose the school that best serves their children's needs. While any student may enroll in the school, not every school is a good fit for every student. Variety of strategies, including community presentations, school tours, written materials, will be implemented to make sure families clearly understand school's program and can assess whether it is a good fit for their child.

### **C.4.3 Diversity: Describe plan to reach students representative of the racial and socio-economic diversity in the community, including typically "harder to reach" families.**

For harder to reach families social workers, probation officers, welfare officials and

## C. Operations Plan

human services agency personnel will be provided information that they in turn can give to families with whom they work. Applications will also be monitored for racial diversity and targeted outreach will be conducted for minority and low-income students to reach diversity goals as needed.

Information sessions will be coordinated with the Housing Authorities of Cumberland and Frostburg to reach families in workforce or low-income housing.

Social service and community agencies that target hard to reach or at-risk populations such as, but not limited to the court system, homeless shelters, family case managers, libraries and health clinics will be contacted to create awareness and address concerns and questions about the school.

Local networks of family childcare providers receiving payments through the child care assistance program and head start network will be used as a important resource to reach at-risk students. Collaboration with community or social service agencies such as religious establishments, caseworkers, youth centers, libraries, etc. will also be made.

Focus groups will be conducted with different combinations of family members, community members, and retired school staff on varied topics to determine community needs. Efforts will be made to make sure that every student group is represented. Applications will be monitored for racial diversity and targeted outreach will be conducted for minority students to reach diversity

### **C.5 Transportation**

**C.5.1 Transportation Plan: Describe the plan to address the transportation needs of all students, including low-income and at-risk pupils. Include planned arrangement, if any, with the district, private providers, and with parents.**

In order to provide transportation for those students who will require it, MMPCS will contract with an appropriately credentialed and certified school busing provider. Routes will be determined based on the geographic distribution of enrolled students following

Mountain Maryland Public Charter School application

September 1, 2010

Page 148

### C. Operations Plan

the MMPCS enrollment period. Route planning may include limiting bus routes to high-density enrollment areas and having centralized pick-up locations for enrolled students distributed over a wider geographic area.

MMPCS will assess a transportation fee for bus use. The fee assessment will be based on an income sliding scale with discounts for additional siblings. The transportation fee will require an annual commitment with monthly payments. Families who meet income guideline requirements will be exempt from the transportation fee.

MMPCS will offer a “Hop On” Pass option. The Hop On Pass can be used by students who require only occasional transportation services. With advance notice to the transportation provider and at the provider’s discretion, Hop On Pass holders may board the bus at an established MMPCS loading location and will be asked to show their pass before boarding. Hop on Passes will be available in limited quantities through the MMPCS school office.

MMPCS will facilitate contacts among enrolled families who wish to carpool. Strategies to promote carpooling may include networking opportunities through the school web-site or a parent-led committee to coordinate transport among families.

**C.5.2 Transportation Barriers: Describe how your school administration will ensure that transportation is not a barrier to equal access for all students in accordance with the local school districts’ policies and procedures. Special education pupils may have IEPs or 504 plans requiring specific transportation modes. Cite local school district policies and procedures for charter school students, if available.**

Because MMPCS is requesting a waiver from the ACPS School Attendance Area Policy (JC), MMPCS intends to work with families and transportation providers to ensure that every enrolled student has safe and reliable transportation to school every school day regardless of their attendance area.

## C. Operations Plan

Students whose IEPs or 504s designate specific transportation accommodations for accessibility and safety such as wheelchair lifts or tie-downs that cannot be met through existing transportation options, will receive contract transportation services as indicated by their IEP/504 plans.

### **C.6. Food Services**

#### **C.6.1 Describe plans to provide food services and any intent to contract with the district regarding food services.**

As part of the MMPCS educational philosophy that children's intellectual, social-emotional and physical development are interdependent, MMPCS plans to develop a school meal program that promotes students' healthy eating habits. The MMPCS Board plans to contract with local food growers and vendors and culinary service providers. These partnerships will afford MMPCS students opportunities to become more aware of healthy food choices and the role of food in their lives.

#### **C.6.2 Describe plans to address National School Lunch requirements for free and reduced meals. How will information regarding household income be collected?**

MMPCS school meals and snacks will meet the standards of the 1995 Dietary Guidelines for Americans including guidelines for calories from fat, including saturated fat, and standards for vitamin content with respect to Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA). MMPCS will operate its food service program in compliance with all applicable regulations and guidelines stipulated by the National School Lunch Program, the Maryland State Department of Education, and the Allegany County Health Department.

Free and reduced-priced meals will be provided to students who qualify according to State and Federal guidelines. Information regarding household income will be collected via the Free and Reduced Meal Plan Application which will be included in the New Student Enrollment packet. All enrollment forms and all student data and household information will be treated as sensitive, housed securely and will comply with FERPA regulations as mandated.

## C. Operations Plan

### **C.7 Student Records**

#### **C.7.1 Acquisition and Maintenance of Student Records**

Student records will be formatted in compliance with the guidelines outlined in the Maryland Student Record System Manual of 2007.

Student records will be managed in a FERPA-compliant manner. All student records will be maintained in a locked filing cabinet. The principal and the secretary will each have a key. A sign-in sheet will be kept with the cabinet. Prior to accessing a student record file, Mountain Maryland PCS staff and Allegany County Public Schools staff will be required to fill out the sign-in sheet with the following information: Name of the student whose file is under review, date and time of review, name and professional title of reviewing party, purpose of file review and the reviewer's signature. The sign-in sheet must be co-signed by the principal or secretary at the time of review. A reviewer sign-in sheet will be kept in the student's file and will contain the following information: date and time of review, name and professional title of reviewing party, purpose of file review and the reviewer's signature.

Parents will be notified of their rights under FERPA, including parents' rights to request that information in their child's record be amended, their right to a hearing if school administrator declines to amend the record and their right to place a complementary statement in the record. Parents will also be informed of the conditions under which records can be released without parental consent and which conditions require parents be notified of the release of information and parents right to refuse these information releases.

Parents will be notified of their rights annually via the student/parent handbook. Record review for determination of eligibility for special education will require explicit parental consent for this purpose.

#### **C.7.2. Dissemination of Student Information/Records**

## C. Operations Plan

Student records will be furnished upon parental request at any time. In the event of a student transferring to another school, student records will be forwarded upon request in writing from the receiving school. When possible, parents will be requested to sign a release of records consent upon notification to Mountain Maryland P.C.S. staff that their child will be withdrawing from Mountain Maryland P.C.S. If no such consent is furnished, Mountain Maryland P.C.S. will release the student's records to the receiving school upon written request in compliance with FERPA section (b)(1)(B).

### **C.8 Implementation of the Charter**

#### **C.8.1 Timetable and tasks for Implementation of Charter**

See Appendix XVII - Project Timeline for detailed description of pre-operational project plans and start up activities.

#### **C.8.2 Orientation of Parents, Teachers and other Community Members**

Initial orientation of new faculty will occur during MMPCS' pre-service training prior to the start of school. Teacher pre-service training will address strategies to support positive teacher-parent/guardian relationships and how teachers can encourage families to participate in the MMPCS school community.

Following the start of each school year, families will be invited to participate in a New Family Orientation at which opportunities for family involvement, family support and training opportunities and the unique governance structure of MMPCS will be discussed.

Following the start of operations, families interested in applying for admission to MMPCS will be asked to first attend a regularly scheduled school tour and open house which will be a general question and answer format and will serve as an introduction to the MMPCS mission and educational model.

The Board of Directors of MMPCS has developed a vigorous network of community supporters and intends to continue efforts to draw community partners into students' learning and the life of the school.

## C. Operations Plan

### **C.8.3 Services from district**

MMPCS will request contract services for Special Education for ACPS. The MMPCS Board is requesting waivers for staffing and food services and therefore will not be requesting to contract with ACPS for services in those areas. For details of waiver requests see Sections C.3.2 and C.8.4.

### **C.8.4 Waiver Requests: Please submit a list of waivers of state and local policies and regulations. Each waiver request must include a rationale and alternative plan.**

#### State Waivers

1. Waiver of Education Article Sections 9-108(a), 6-401(d), 6-501(f), 4-103(a), and 4-311 that all charter school employees are public school employees subject to applicable collective bargaining agreements.
  - a. MMPCS will be allowed to hire its own staff, other than lead teachers, through its non-profit operator. This will allow for flexibility and autonomy for employees who are not full time classroom teachers. This choice will give MMPCS freedom to employ innovative and successful models for staffing. It allows MMPCS to hire highly qualified, non-traditional staff. It allows MMPCS to supervise and evaluate staff based on our unique model. This waiver will allow greater alignment between staffing and the educational program which will positively impact the students and families we serve.
  
2. Waiver of Education Article Sections 4-103(a) and 6-201 that the superintendent shall nominate for appointment all principals, teachers and clerical personnel.
  - a. Full-time lead classroom teachers will be employed by ACPS, however, MMPCS shall be able to recruit and select its own principal, teachers and clerical personnel, subject to final approval of the superintendent, provided said approval shall not be unreasonably withheld. It is

## C. Operations Plan

imperative that MMPCS be allowed freedom and autonomy to recruit and select the principal and teachers who will be responsible for implementing its mission, vision and educational programs. Selecting the principal and teachers will be one of the most critical decisions made by MMPCS and will insure its academic success.

3. Waiver of Education Article Section 9-102(3) that a charter school is open to all students on a space-available basis and admits students on a lottery basis if more students apply than can be accommodated to allow children of founders and teachers, currently enrolled students and siblings of students admitted to or attending MMPCS to have priority.
  - a. This waiver will allow MMPCS to adopt the common charter school practice of exempting certain categories of applicants from the lottery and admitting them automatically. Enrollment priority shall be given to children and siblings of founders and teachers, currently enrolled students whose parents timely submitted the Re-Enrollment form and siblings of students admitted to or attending MMPCS. This policy is allowed pursuant to the Federal Charter Schools Program (CSP) non-regulatory guidance amended in June 2007 which is found in the Federal Charter School Program Title V, Part B, Non-Regulatory Guidance. See <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/cspguidance03.doc>.
  - b. This waiver will enable those who have worked hard to bring MMPCS into existence to enroll their own children. For teachers it encourages those who work at the school to have the benefit of an alternative education for their own children and will facilitate loyalty as well as a positive model for the community. This will be a great benefit to teachers who desire to improve their child's school as well as to serve the children of the community.
  - c. In accordance with the CSP guidance, once a student has been admitted to MMPCS, he or she may remain in attendance through subsequent grades. School-aged siblings of students admitted to or attending MMPCS will

## C. Operations Plan

also be given priority as we recognize the importance to families that siblings attend the same school.

4. Waiver that specified procurements be subject to competitive bidding as required by Education Article Section 5-112 and other local procurement requirements under Section 4-310.
  - a. Unless MMPCS obtains goods and services directly from ACPS it will not be subject to any state or local procurement regulations, policies or procedures regarding procurement except auditing.
  - b. MMPCS will develop and submit a procurement policy modeled on best practice standards for Maryland non-profit entities and will do its best to obtain equipment and service for the lowest responsible price. However MMPCS will need to obtain supplies and resources quickly and economically. It should not be subject to the same procurement requirements and procedures that apply to a large centralized school system. The necessity to contain costs will promote the best use of funds to provide the supplies and services it needs to operate. This waiver will allow MMPCS to procure resources in alignment with its approved educational program and will enable the school to address student need in a timely manner.
  
5. Waiver of Education Article Section 9-105 that a member of the professional staff of a public charter school shall hold the appropriate Maryland Certification.
  - a. MMPCS will hire the best person for the job. The students and staff will be well served by the hiring of highly motivated, well qualified, dedicated educators. This may require the autonomy to hire highly qualified educators who have not yet been state certified.
  
6. Waiver of Education Article Section 4-205 that a contract made by a county board is not valid without the written approval of the county superintendent.

## C. Operations Plan

a. MMPCS will need autonomy in entering into contracts which support its unique mission. For instance, MMPCS plans to enter into a contractual arrangement with food service providers, publishers of selected curricula, service providers such as telecommunications and office equipment suppliers.

7. Waiver of Education Article Section 4-205(1)(2) that the county superintendent shall prepare all plans and specifications for remodeling an old building or constructing a new building.

a. MMPCS will need the autonomy and authority to prepare all plans and specifications for remodeling on old building or constructing a new building which serves its students and families and supports its unique mission and academic program. All plans and specifications will be in accordance with MSDE facilities guidelines.

8. Waiver of COMAR Section 13A.06.01, Programs for Food and Nutrition.

a. MMPCS will become a school food authority and will implement an innovative lunch program. Students and staff will be able to participate in a lunch program designed for MMPCS. The program will be based on innovative models aligned with the latest nutritional guidelines and research. We will form partnerships with local farms and other local organizations whose missions align with and support the MMPCS lunch program.

### Local Waivers

See Section C.3.2 above.

### **C.9 School Management Contracts**

The founding board of MMPCS has not nor does it plan to contract with an educational management organization.

## D. Facilities Plan

### ***D. Facilities Plan***

#### **D.1 Charter School Facility Identified**

If a charter school facility has been identified provide the information listed below in sections D1.1 through D.1.5.

##### **D.1.1 Indicate the location, including street address.**

600 Memorial Avenue, South Wing, Cumberland, MD 21502

##### **D.1.2 Describe the facility. If possible, provide a layout and description of the proposed charter school facility. Include the number and size of the classrooms, common areas, recreational space, any community facilities, and any residential facilities. Explain how the facility will meet the needs of students who are physically challenged. (Include any plans for: media center, gym, cafeteria, administration, restrooms, kitchen, etc.)**

The facility is located on the East Side of Cumberland within a largely residential neighborhood. MMPCS plans to occupy the 2d and 3d floors of the South Wing of the Memorial Campus. The South Wing consists of two corridors which join at a 45-degree angle at the base. At the base of the corridors is a reception area. The elevator lobby and related spaces are just beyond the reception area.

The corridors are lined with rooms which measure 12'x24' on the left side of the corridor and 18' x 24' on the right side of the corridor.

The MMPCS Board plans to conduct interior modifications to reconfigure the floor plans to meet minimum square foot guidelines for classrooms. In the first phase of renovation, the site will be modified to house 5 classrooms. Classroom areas will be based on the classroom area guidelines in place in ACPS. The Kindergarten classroom will be 1000 square feet. Classrooms for 1<sup>st</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades will be 800 square feet. The second phase of renovations will include classrooms for grades 5-8 which will also meet ACPS practice guidelines for classroom area. Design plans include a bathroom in each classroom.

Each corridor occupies one level and is ADA compliant. There are no steps within or between corridors on the same floor. The elevator lobby is immediately outside the reception area. Doors to the corridor are equipped with a switch-activated auto-open feature.

Memorial Campus has a cafeteria which will be made available to MMPCS students. The cafeteria kitchen is equipped with hook-ups for industrial kitchen equipment.

Administrative spaces and a health suite are planned for the area behind the reception area. Storage space for curricular materials and supplies is planned for this area. A faculty meeting room will be located along the corridor outside near the reception/administrative area.

## D. Facilities Plan

### **D.1.3 Demonstrate how this site would be a suitable facility for the proposed school, including any plans to renovate and bring facility into compliance with all applicable local building codes. Include plans for security, maintenance and custodial services.**

This site suits the needs of MMPCS because it provides adequate space in a safe and code-compliant building. Memorial Campus is also located within an area of the community MMPCS plans to target for student recruitment. This site will reduce barriers to attendance for students who live on the East Side, including Decatur Heights, South Cumberland and Rolling Mills.

The current configuration of the spaces described will allow for an affordable remodeling plan. Remodel plans will allow teachers to use spaces flexibly within their classrooms and within common areas of the school.

This location is fully accessible in accordance with ADA regulations and meets state fire codes. During the site review a Maryland State Fire Marshall, Mike Mattingly and Cumberland Fire Chief Shannon Adams conducted a preliminary walk-through and found no irremediable complications related to safety and evacuation procedures. For Fire Safety Inspection Report see Appendix XVIII.

Each level of the facility is secure. Double doors separate the elevator lobby from the school reception area. A card swipe security system is in place and the property manager has indicated it could be reactivated for school use. Stairwells located at the ends of the corridors are locked from the inside and cannot be opened from within the stairwell without a key.

Security plans include identifying the lower level reception area as the main entrance to the school. The doors outside the upper level reception area will be secured to prevent unauthorized entry. Visitors will be required to sign in with the administrative assistant and receive a visitor's badge upon entry.

MMPCS' neighbors in the South Wing include Western Maryland Area Health Education Center (WMAHEC). Other campus residents include Green Foods, D'Atri's and several private medical practices which are all located in the Central Wing.

MMPCS plans to contract with a custodial service for facilities maintenance.

### **D.1.4 Provide a detailed breakdown of any anticipated construction or renovation along with estimated costs (these should be discussed in the text and reflected in the budget).**

The MMPCS board is currently pursuing in-kind donations for the drafting and design of facility remodel plans. These plans will drive the remodel budget. An existing tenant occupying one floor at the South Wing, AHEC, spent \$45,000 for its remodeling project. The floors proposed to be used by the charter school have similar space and structures,

## D. Facilities Plan

and will involve similar types of remodeling work, such as creating bigger rooms by removing existing separation walls, removing utility/medical plugs, installing new floors in the classrooms, and painting classroom walls, etc. Therefore, the MMPCS board reasonably allocates \$100,000 remodeling cost for each floor, which is reflected in the budget. Remodel plans will be carried out in two phases: Phase 1 – Spring 2011, Phase 2 – Spring 2012. For additional detail on renovation funding, see Appendix XIX – Budget Worksheets.

### **D.1.5 If the charter school or its applicants or partners would own or lease its facility, provide a description of the ownership or lease arrangement of the facility. Identify any potential conflicts of interest and arrangements by which such conflicts will be managed or avoided.**

Preliminary lease negotiations with Ridgecrest Investments include a 3-year lease with an option to renew for 2 additional years at the same rental rate. The lease would be held by the non-profit parent of MMPCS. The lease agreement would be reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors prior to final commitment.

No founding member of the Board of Directors has ownership, partial or otherwise, in the Memorial Campus, nor any declared partnership with or financial interest in Ridgecrest Investments. Nor does any founding member stand to gain financially by the lease arrangements currently under negotiation between the MMPCS Board and Ridgecrest Investments.

### **D.1.6 Describe financing plans for acquisition (purchase, lease, etc.) and renovation of the facility.**

Because the state of Maryland provides no funding to public charter schools for their facility development plans, the MMPCS board plans to partner with Charter School Development Corporation (CSDC) to apply for a bridge loan through Standard Bank to finance the remodeling of the identified levels of the Memorial Campus South Wing. Through its Building Blocks Program, CSDC provides collateral to start-up charter schools to enable them to secure loans to fund their facilities plans.

Neither a contract with CSDC nor an agreement of final terms with Standard Bank can be reached until the MMPCS charter is granted.

## E. Business Plan

### E. Business Plan

#### E.1 Finance

**Under current Maryland law , “a county board shall disburse to a public charter school, an amount of county, state, and federal money for elementary, middle, and secondary students that is commensurate with the amount disbursed to other public schools in the local jurisdiction.”**

##### E.1.1 Anticipated Per-pupil funds

**Discuss the level of funding anticipated from the per pupil allocation.**

The Maryland State Board of Education has established a state-wide funding formula for public charter schools. When applied the ACPS FY 10-11 Budget Summary, the anticipated per pupil allotment is \$11,561.51. The calculation is stated as follows:

Total unrestricted funds:	\$111,309,621
divided by:	
Student enrollment (by 9/30/09):	9152
<hr/>	
PPA for ACPS:	\$12,162.33
x 98%* :	\$11,919.08
x 97%**:	\$11,561.51

\* The state formula for PPA is 98% of the district's unrestricted funds.

\*\*There is an anticipated 3% budget cut in FY2012.

##### E.1.2 Additional Funds

**Indicate the amount and sources of additional funds, property, or other resources expected to be available for the costs of planning, startup, and operation of the proposed public charter school. Where grants or loans are included, please indicate which of these are in hand and which are anticipated. For anticipated grants or loans, provide evidence of firm commitments where they exist. Describe**

## E. Business Plan

**what contingencies are in place in the event that funds for per pupil allocations are not available as early as expected, or are lower than expected.**

MMPCS intends to apply to the MSDE Office of Innovation for charter school start up grants. These grants total \$550,000 through the design and implementation phases of charter school operations. MSDE grant review protocols indicate that grant applications be submitted to MSDE Office of Innovations after the charter school application has been submitted to the LEA. MSDE staff have indicated that grants are awarded upon approval of a charter and completion of a charter school contract.

The monetary award from MSDE will be enhanced by up to \$150,000 for charter school projects that meet certain priorities. MMPCS plans to meet the required priorities to obtain additional funds. However, to be conservative, this potential award is not included as projected revenue in our budget.

The Board of MMPCS has contacted several financial institutions regarding bridge loans and funding for facility development. These institutions include Standard Bank with whom the non-profit parent corporation of MMPCS has established an account. The MMPCS Board Finance Committee has discussed the possibility of a bridge loan with Standard Bank. Self-Help, Inc is a non-profit community reinvestment fund with which our board has been in contact regarding funding sources for facility development. Self-Help works with charter schools to provide funding for facility projects.

In the event of a delay in PPA funding, the MMPCS would pursue a bridge loan through Standard Bank to cover operating costs for the length of the anticipated delay.

Our projected budget has a built-in cushion to ensure financial viability if revenue from PPA is lower than anticipated.

### **E.1.3 Planned Fundraising Efforts**

**Describe any planned fundraising efforts to generate capital or to supplement the**

## E. Business Plan

**per pupil allocation for operating expenses. Discuss plans for raising funds to cover planning and development expenses expected to occur prior to opening the school.**

The founding board is actively recruiting new members with fundraising and development experience. To date, start up costs have been funded by founders' contributions.

The primary source of start-up funds prior to and following the start of school operations will be federal charter school grants administered by MSDE. The founding board plans to submit an application to MSDE for these grants in October 2010.

The founding board is currently researching additional grant opportunities to fund activities during the design and planning stage of operations.

The founding board plans to conduct fundraising activities during community-wide events such as the Appalachian Festival, Canal Days and other local venues.

The founding board is currently pursuing in-kind contributions to fund facility design, drafting and construction costs.

A fundraising goal and link for contributions will be placed on the MMPCS website.

The founding board will continue to cultivate relationships with local businesses and local leaders to identify on-going opportunities for community level support and fundraising partnerships.

### **E.2 Financial Management and Accounting**

**E.2.1 Financial Management: Explain what position in the school will be responsible for managing the school's finances, as well as the qualifications required for person holding that position.**

## E. Business Plan

Board Treasurer, Dr. Yan Bao, takes the lead in preparing the start-up and multi-year budget for MMPCS. Dr. Bao is currently an Associate Professor of accounting in the College of Business at Frostburg State University. She has years of academic and business experience in accounting profession. Our board's Finance Committee will oversee the school's financial management in collaboration with the School Director. The members of Finance Committee include:

1. Dr. Yan Bao, Committee Chair, Board Treasurer, CPA (China)
2. Ms. Nidhi Jain, experienced financial analyst
3. Ms. Michele Mathias, experienced in project planning/management and budgeting.

**E.2.2 Financial Management and Accounting: Describe the fiscal controls and financial management policies the school will employ to track finances in its daily business operations. Describe how the school will develop its annual budget. Describe school cash flow management plan and how it will ensure availability of funds throughout the year. *The charter school must agree to maintain its financial records in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (as defined by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants). All charter schools will be required to make all financial records available to district personnel within 48 hours of a request for auditing purposes.***

The development and implementation of fiscal policies and procedures are critical to the success of MMPCS. We will maintain financial records in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. We will make all financial records available to the district personnel within 48 hours of a request for auditing purposes. We plan to use the bookkeeping service from CBIZ MHM LLC, a local independent CPA firm. We will develop an effective internal control structure through a segregation of duties. That is we will assign similar fiscal tasks to separate individuals in order to eliminate the opportunity for misappropriation of the school's assets due to intentional acts or simple human errors. The Board has developed and approved the following internal control

## E. Business Plan

policies. A more detailed procurement policy manual will be completed. The Board may adopt resolutions to this policy to ensure the most efficient and effective internal control structure.

1. Principal/Chair/Vice-Chair/Treasurer approves purchases below \$3,000 and prepares a report of itemized purchases for the Finance Committee to review.
2. Signatures from two of the following people are required for purchases in excess of \$3,000: Principal/Chair/Vice-Chair/Treasurer.
3. In addition, any vendor whose goods or services exceed \$15,000 during any fiscal year must be selected as a vendor through a competitive bid process.

The steps for making a purchase are as follows:

1. Complete Purchase Request Form and forward to the Principal for approval.
2. Principal will approve request and sign or obtain the necessary signatures (for items over \$3,000).
3. Once signed, Purchase Request Form will be forwarded to the ordering designee (i.e. secretary) for generation of a Purchase Order Form.
4. Ordering designee completes form and places order.
5. Purchase Order original is forwarded to Bookkeeper and copies are given to the ordering designee.
6. Once items and invoices are received, ordering designee compares items to invoice and purchase order form. If all items are present and in good working condition, invoice is approved and forwarded to bookkeeper for payment.
7. Bookkeeper validates invoice, checks for duplicates and issues check for payment. Invoice and check stubs are filed with purchase order original.

When a condition exists that requires the immediate, emergency purchase of supplies, materials or equipment to prevent delay in work that may vitally affect MMPCS' programs, the Emergency Order Procedure below may be followed:

1. The Principal, Chair, Vice-Chair or Treasurer may contact a vendor directly to obtain the needed supplies or services.

## E. Business Plan

2. Within three working days after this contract, a Purchase Order form must be generated with the words “EMERGENCY” written prominently on the form.
3. If the goods are paid for up front and no invoice is generated, a receipt shall be attached to the Purchase Order form.
4. For emergency purchases over \$3,000, prior approval must be obtained from the Chair/Vice-Chair/Treasurer.
5. Emergency procedures should not be used for commodities requiring a contract.

The annual budget is the planning document for the school year. It is created by the Principal with teachers’ input and Board input via the Finance Committee. The board approves the budget. The Treasurer reviews the budget regularly. The Principal along with the Finance Committee will prepare at least quarterly reports to the Board for review. This budget will provide guidance for all purchasing decisions made during that fiscal year. A cash flow management plan will be created and reviewed monthly. At the start of each month, the Treasurer will forward to the Principal and Board of Directors a detail of cash available by category as well as prior cash outlays. Upon receipt of Purchase Requests, the budget will be reviewed to determine availability of funds.

### **E.2.3 Complete and attach budget worksheets**

#### **E.2.3.a Start-up budget, covering only the planning and capital expenses necessary before school opening**

See Appendix XIX – Budget Worksheets.

#### **E.2.3.b Multi-year budget that coincides with the proposed length of the initial charter and based on the projected enrollment for that period of time.**

See Appendix XIX – Budget Worksheets.

#### **E.2.3.c Cash flow projections for the first year displayed month by month and a plan to fund any cash flow shortfalls.**

See Appendix XIX – Budget Worksheets.

## E. Business Plan

**E.2.4 Indicate any contributions of funds or in-kind donations of goods or services expected to be received by the charter school. In the budget, only include those grants or in-kind donations which have already been firmly committed and for which documentation is attached. If planning to pursue certain grants or donations that have not yet been committed, do not include them in the budget – instead, provide a description of these potential contributions in your narrative (including the source, estimated amount of contribution, and expected date of receipt if known).**

The founding board is pursuing in-kind donations related to the design and drafting of the MMPCS facility. For additional information on fundraising plans see section E.1.3.

### **E.3 Civil and Liability Insurance**

**E.3.1 Insurance: Indicate the types of insurance and the levels of coverage sought. All insurance policies required shall be endorsed to provide that the policy is not subject to cancellation, non-renewal, or material reduction in coverage until sixty (60) days prior written notice has been given to the district Board of Education.**

The Board of Directors is in contact with an Insurance Consultant, Albert E. Lietzau IV, to procure and maintain insurance policies in full force and effect at all times with H.U. Dove & Company, Inc., which is an independent insurance broker with a Maryland license, and provides similar insurance policy to other charter schools.

**E.3.2 Insurance Documents: Approval of insurance will be granted only after submission to the Board of original certificates of insurance signed by authorized representatives of the insurers, or, at the Board's request, certified copies of the required insurance policies. The required insurance shall be in force throughout the term of the charter school's operations.**

For required limits and coverage see Appendix XX.

## E. Business Plan

**E.3.3 Management Firms (if applicable):** The charter school shall require all management firms to maintain during the term of their contractual arrangements, commercial general liability insurance, business auto liability insurance, workers compensation and employers liability insurance and umbrella excess or excess liability insurance, to the same extent required of the charter school unless any such requirement is expressly waived or amended by the board in writing. Attach copies of the management firms' certificates of insurance.

The non-profit board overseeing MMPCS has not and does not plan to contract with an education management firm in the operation of the public charter school.

## E.4 Audit

**E.4.1 Provision for Audit:** Describe the provisions that will be made for conducting annual audits of the financial operations of the school. *An audit of financial statements must be made annually, according to Government Auditing Standards, by a Certified Public Accountant licensed in the State of Maryland.*

MMPCS plans to have the annual financial audit conducted by Draper & McGinley in Frederick, MD. Draper & McGinley is a Maryland licensed accounting firm with experience in public charter school finance and audits.