



## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM POLICY

*This policy was approved by the Governing Council on April 27, 2016.*

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to communicate Mountain Phoenix's educational program as it strives to bring forth Public Waldorf Education within a Jeffco Charter School.

### **Educational Principles**

Mountain Phoenix shall implement a Public Waldorf curriculum and pedagogy guided by an ongoing study of the seven core principles of Public Waldorf Education.

1. Image of the Human Being
2. Phases of Child Development
3. Development of Curriculum
4. Freedom in Teaching
5. Methodology of Teaching
6. Relationships
7. Teacher's Inner Work and Self Reflection

In addition to the above principles, pedagogical and curriculum decisions are guided by the rigorous effort to co-align 21st century skills within the framework of Waldorf Curriculum.

### **Standards**

Mountain Phoenix is committed to developmentally appropriate, high academic standards developed through the rigorous effort to co-align Colorado Academic Standards (CAS), Common Core Standards, and 21st century skills within the framework of Waldorf Curriculum. While the placement of each standard may be different based on the development stage of each grade, the MPCS curriculum delivers all of the K-8 Common Core Standards by the end of Grade 8.

### **Academic Components**

Pedagogical and curriculum decisions are guided by the core principles of Public Waldorf Education. The following subjects are standard elements of the educational program at Mountain Phoenix:

#### *Base Curriculum*

The school implements a Public Waldorf curriculum and pedagogy based on the core principles of Public Waldorf Education and shall use the MPCS Curriculum Summary and Curriculum Framework documents as the base curriculum for Social Studies, Math, Science, and English/Language Arts. The school shall cover 100% of the kindergarten through grade 8 Common Core State Standards by the end of the 8th grade.

#### *Music/Orchestra/Band*

The school implements a music curriculum following the standards from the Association of Waldorf Music Education. The pentatonic flute is introduced in Grade 1, Orchestra is introduced in Grade 3, and students have the option between orchestra or band in grades 5-8 which is typically offered 2-3 times a week.

#### *Handwork*

Handwork supports the child's natural sense of beauty, color, and form and lays the groundwork for other artistic work throughout the grades in the Public Waldorf curriculum. It includes knitting, crocheting, weaving, sewing, and cross stitch. This work significantly aids the child's development of fine motor skills, sequencing and spatial awareness. Handwork is typically offered twice a week in Grades 1-8.

#### *World Language*

Learning other languages is an important part of the Waldorf approach to education as a gateway to understanding and communicating with people from different cultures who have their own individuality and experiences of daily life. Through learning another language, the child's

thinking becomes more flexible, and his whole horizon is widened to a view of global citizenship. Spanish is typically offered 1-2 times per week in Grades 1-8.

#### *Movement/Physical Education/Games*

Research shows a close connection between bodily movement, spatial integration, and brain development. Games and movement classes focus on imaginative games that are developmentally appropriate for each class' age, encouraging teamwork, cooperation, problem solving, and individual successes. When it is developmentally appropriate, opportunities are provided to improve coordination and balance through obstacle courses and gymnastic activities, exploring strength and strategy, team building, and trust building. Movement and games classes are typically offered 2-3 times per week in Grades 1-8.

#### *Art*

At MPCS art permeates the whole curriculum throughout the grades. In addition to this immersion in drawing, painting, form drawing, and modeling of beeswax and clay, a specialty art teacher works with the children in deepening their experience of art, while making rich connections between what they are creating and what they are learning in main lesson. Typically extra art classes are 1-2 times per week.

#### *Technology Integration*

Starting in Grade 6, the school integrates digital citizenship into the curriculum following the curriculum of Cyber Civics.

#### *Character Education*

For all grades within Waldorf Education, character development is inherent in the curriculum that is offered. In addition, the school shall use the *Compassionate Campus* approach for further development of social wellness and self discipline, including the prevention of bullying. The *Compassionate Campus* approach uses the power of the classroom community, student-to-student interactions, and mentoring relationships to build real-life skills that cultivate empathy and resolve conflicts.

### **Kindergarten**

The Kindergarten is a play-based, half day or full day, one or two-year program for the child turning 5 or 6 years old during the year. In the Kindergarten, the teachers gently lead the child across the bridge from home to school, laying a strong, healthy foundation for the academic program that begins in First Grade.

### **Class Teacher Rotation**

A distinctive aspect of Waldorf education is the looping of class teachers. At Mountain Phoenix, the teacher who provides the daily academic core stays with the same class multiple years. Students stay with one teacher for pre-K, one teacher for Kindergarten, one teacher for grades 1-5 and one teacher from grades 6-8. One great benefit to this approach is the opportunity for growth of a deep, meaningful relationship between teacher and students; the teachers truly know their students and can help them overcome obstacles over a longer educational span. In addition, classes develop strong social cohesion because of the more family-like environment.

### **Main Lesson Blocks**

Each morning, students have a two-hour main lesson block with their class teacher. During this time the class focuses on a subject and the associated skills for 3-4 weeks. This approach allows teachers to cover the curriculum intensively and economically and provides students the fullest possible immersion in a subject so each academic subject receives special focus during the course of the year.

### **Textbooks**

Students at Mountain Phoenix write and illustrate self-created textbooks (Main Lesson book) representing the material learned in that block of curriculum. The daily Main Lesson includes work in the Main Lesson book. The student writes and illustrates one of these in the course of each block, gaining much practice in handwriting, grammar, art and composition along the way. Creating one's own book, rather than simply reading a textbook, anchors knowledge solidly. The enthusiastic pride children take in creating their books demonstrates a true joy in learning. Teachers refer to a variety of resources to present the curriculum in an age-appropriate manner.

### **Supplemental Resources**

The Director of Education sets guidelines to ensure supplemental resources align with the curriculum and the developmental approach of Public Waldorf Education.

### **Field Trips**

Mountain Phoenix takes students on immersion trips that blend academics with real world experience. Field trips are appropriately planned based on classroom developmental stage and curriculum to enrich the children's experience and learning. Most field trips are day trips that occur during regular school hours, with overnight trips as an option as the children get older. The program has a pattern of annual trips that may culminate in a capstone 8th Grade Class Trip where students typically travel for a 5-7 day service project.

### **The Class Play**

Most classes perform a play during the course of the year. The theme of the play is tied to the curriculum of the grade level, and all students participate in some fashion, including set design, backstage support, props, acting, singing, and costumes. The play is a whole class experience which promotes teamwork, shared goals, and collective effort. In some grades the two classes may combine their efforts in one play.

### **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)**

As part of the public education system, Mountain Phoenix supports universal access to classrooms and each student's achievement of grade level expectations. Daily lessons are balanced in their content of academic skill, artistic expression, and kinesthetic engagement and the teacher recognizes cognitive differentiation and personal individuation when delivering instruction. Differentiated instructional practices are

part of every teacher's skill set and form the basis for accommodating individual student needs within the classroom and developing additional instructional and/or behavioral plans when necessary to fully support student success and the achievement of MPCS grade level learning goals. Importantly, differentiation practices are **not** used to define student ability groups on a permanent basis and the class teacher balances these practices by continuously fostering a sense of community and social harmony based upon an integrated, mixed-ability educational environment that provides equity of opportunity.

Students who are performing below grade level will be provided additional learning support. Teachers will implement appropriate interventions and/or accommodations to support the student's learning and monitor progress. A Child Study team may be convened to gain more insight into the child's needs and to prepare a learning plan for the child. Follow up meetings are held to determine success of the intervention, accommodations, and whether additional support systems are required. If current strategies are not working, the plan will be altered until success is achieved. Parents are included as collaborative partners in developing the appropriate educational plan to support their child.

## **Student Support Services and Enrichment**

Students needing additional support beyond the level of classroom accommodations receive support through Mountain Phoenix's Student Support Services department which includes Highly Qualified Special Education Teachers, Para-Educators, Educational Support Staff, School Nurse, and additional service providers for Speech Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Psychology, and English language proficiency.

The Student Support Services team supports classroom teachers through mentoring and by providing trainings and consulting in MTSS efforts. They work in collaboration with the classroom teacher and parents to close learning gaps for children who struggle academically, behaviorally, and socially using a variety of holistic and academic research-based intervention strategies to provide the most effective individualized educational intervention for each child.

## **Individual Education Plans (IEPs)**

Students identified as having a qualifying disability according to the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are provided special education and related services according to an Individual Education Plan that ensures each student's unique needs are met and prepares them for further education and success.

A parent or class teacher can refer a student for special education evaluation. Such referrals typically follow the work of the Child Study team within the MTSS process and their determination that additional support beyond classroom level interventions and accommodations are needed. Once a referral is made, Mountain Phoenix's Student Support Services team will facilitate an evaluation process to determine the student's needs and eligibility for special education services. If it is determined that a student meets the eligibility requirements, a multi-disciplinary team including parents, the class teacher, school administration and additional related service providers as needed, will develop the IEP to ensure appropriate instruction that supports student learning and successful access to the Mountain Phoenix educational program.

Parents/Guardians of students with an existing IEP seeking to enroll at Mountain Phoenix are required to inform the school of their child's disability and needs by providing a copy of the student's IEP before enrollment can be confirmed. The Student Support Services team will review the educational requirements of the IEP to ensure MPCS has the capacity to fulfill the specific educational requirements according to its contract with Jeffco Public Schools. Once the Student Support Services team has accepted the incoming IEP transfer and enrollment is confirmed, the Student Support Services team will work in collaboration with the class teacher and parents to tailor the IEP to support complete instructional and environmental access to Mountain Phoenix's curriculum standards and unique educational program.

Students who are gifted or twice exceptional will receive consideration to meet their needs and support their success in school. In all cases, Mountain Phoenix meets the legal standards of IDEA by providing a Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment possible to ensure equitable access for all students and families choosing to enroll in its educational program.

## **READ Plans**

In compliance with the Colorado READ Act, students reading below grade level are supported by a READ Plan to achieve reading proficiency by the end of third grade. The state of Colorado considers reading proficiency by the end of the third grade a key indicator of future student success and authorizes schools to consider student retention in the early grades to ensure reading proficiency is achieved. The READ Plan is developed to ensure students are achieving the reading skills necessary to meet Mountain Phoenix's grade level expectations. Based on Mountain Phoenix's developmental approach to reading where formal reading instruction begins in first grade, following the birthdate guidelines and First Grade Readiness Assessment outcomes are critical components of successfully accessing the Mountain Phoenix literacy curriculum and achieving reading proficiency by the end of third grade.

## **English Language Learners (ELLs)**

English Language Learners are defined as a student who:

- is unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English
- comes from a non-English speaking home or background
- comes from an environment where a language other than English had a significant impact on an individual's level of English proficiency
- requires specialized or modified instruction in English and in their academic courses
- does not have the language ability to achieve their academic potential

MPCS works with Jeffco District English as a Second Language (ESL) personnel to ensure the needs of English Language Learners are met such that a student's English proficiency level does not impose a barrier to their achievement of essential learning skills and Mountain

Phoenix's grade level curriculum expectations. Based on a student's current level of English language proficiency, class teachers and ESL staff work together to set and monitor language proficiency goals annually in each of the four fluency domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Achievement of these goals is supported by regular tutoring sessions with an ESL tutor who works closely with the class teacher to establish a similar instructional context within which to practice these skills. English Language Learners are supported until they achieve fluency in all four domains.

### **Section 504 General Education Plans**

Students having a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities but are not eligible for special education and related services under IDEA may be eligible for services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. A 504 Plan is a document describing the services and modifications the school commits to provide for a student with a physical or mental impairment who does not qualify for services under IDEA but does require (and qualifies under Section 504) for services, accommodations, or modifications to standard practices to experience educational benefit from the general curriculum. A written 504 Plan remains in place as long as the student has the disability, and is typically reviewed annually.

When considering services under Section 504, a Child Study team including parents is convened to determine eligibility and develop an appropriate educational plan. Eligibility is determined based on two qualifying criteria: (1) the student has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits at least one major life activity (i.e., walking, seeing, hearing, breathing, learning, working, caring for oneself, and performing manual tasks) and (2) the student is qualified to participate in the academic, nonacademic, and extracurricular program under discussion. Eligibility for services under 504 may also be considered for students returning to school following a serious illness or injury.

### **Health Plans**

Health Plans are developed under the guidance of the School Nurse in collaboration with parents, the class teacher, administration, and educational support staff as needed. They are implemented to support students and their families with ongoing health conditions that may need to be (must be?) monitored and addressed during school hours.

### **Advanced Learning Plans**

Students identified as gifted and talented are supported each year by the development of an ALP designed to meet their particular educational needs. To the extent resources are available for this purpose, the class teacher and student work together to set one SMART goal in one of the student's identified areas of strength, the achievement of which:

- encourages enrichment beyond the basic curriculum,
- offers a differentiated curriculum that includes higher cognitive concepts and processes within the curriculum topics of the grade,
- uses instructional strategies that accommodate the learning styles of the gifted and talented,
- fosters the individual growth of each student,
- supports students in the attainment of state and district academic content standards within the context of the MPCS curriculum framework.

Except as otherwise required by law, the Director of Education or designee shall have the final determination regarding placement of students in school programs for the gifted and talented.

### **Extracurricular Activity Rights**

MPCS students may participate in non-academic activities at other schools in the school district provided that the prerequisites for participation are met and there is space available in the desired activity or program. Where such participation requires payment of a fee, the student shall be responsible for payment of the fee.

### **POLICY HISTORY**

*22-32-109(1)(t), C.R.S. Determine educational program and prescribe textbooks (state automatic waiver)*

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