

# CHARTER SCHOOL OF MORGAN HILL

## Introduction

A group of parents, educators, business and community members is working to create a charter school in the community. This effort began in February 2000 with a small group that began investigating steps needed for this project and assessing community interest. With a positive response from community members, this exploratory committee has moved forward, expanding into our current charter launch team. We would like to establish a K-6 school that adds grades 7 and 8 in the second and third years. Our goal is to open the Charter School of Morgan Hill in Fall 2001. Our charter was approved in January by Morgan Hill Unified School District's school board.

## What is a Charter School?

A charter school is a public school that receives its funds directly from the state. As a public school, it is open to all students and cannot charge tuition. It operates independently of the education code and district collective bargaining agreement. Subject to fewer state regulations and separate from the existing school district structure, charter schools are free to design innovative educational experiences for their students, while still held accountable for both academic results and fiscal practices. They are required to administer the growing number of state tests as part of their assessment systems.

Any group may write a charter, which must be approved by a local school board, the county board or even a distant school district board of trustees. A charter may be granted for a period not to exceed five years and may subsequently be renewed. The authority that granted the charter may inspect or observe any part of the charter school at any time. If a charter school does not meet the pupil outcomes specified in its charter, the charter can be revoked. A charter school must have an oversight board guiding its activities.

A California charter school receives its per student state funding once the school has opened. Groups must fundraise from numerous sources, including private donations, state grants, and foundation dollars, in order to raise the school start-up funds.

## What is a Charter?

Under California law, a charter document is a binding legal document that authorizes the school developers to operate a charter school pursuant to the terms of the charter and any applicable laws. A charter can also function as an outline of the design framework for the school, containing the school's vision, mission statement, student learning goals, and operational principles.

## Charter School of Morgan Hill Mission Statement

*Through strong family involvement, community interaction, and project-based learning, the Charter School of Morgan Hill will develop lifelong learners prepared to be innovative participants in the global community.*

We are committed to:

- developing K-8 students who are self-motivated, self-disciplined, and socially responsible
- partnering staff, students, parents, and community, to create a unique, challenging, and individualized learning environment with high academic standards and expectations
- applying academic learning to meaningful real-life activities through project-oriented programs

- providing advanced opportunities in science, technology, languages, the arts, and programs that foster thinking which is independent, critical, collaborative, reflective, and creative
- respecting diversity and whole child development – cognitive, emotional, social, and physical

## Background of School Vision and Mission Statement

The charter explorers developed a vision delineating elements that would be critical components to the future charter school. Emphasis was placed on creating an academically strong, community-connected elementary/middle school program with a strong parent involvement component. Our mission statement was written to reflect the key elements of this early model, which are outlined below:

- **Standards** - Academic achievement will be highly valued; all students are expected to perform at their highest level and to excel in the content areas outlined in the state curriculum standards.
- **Family participation** – Parents and extended family will contribute in a variety of meaningful ways inside and outside of the classroom to enhance the learning experience.
- **Project based learning** - Students will develop and acquire new skills by participating in interactive activities, hands on learning, and field trips, in order that learning will be meaningful, long-lasting, and effective. Project-oriented programs will apply academic learning to meaningful real-life activities.
- **Technology** - Every student will have ready access to computers and use technology across all curricular areas.
- **Formal enrichment activities** – All students will benefit from regular exposure to a variety of programs such as extended science, languages, life skills, music, and other fine arts.
- **Community connection** - Students will understand their connection to the community and their responsibilities as citizens. This could include community service projects and activities as well as having community members come into the classroom.
- **Diversity** - A multi-ethnic and multi-lingual population will attend the school and all cultures will be valued. The diversity of language, culture, and occupations in our south valley community will be an important building block in the program’s structure.
- **Personalization** – The goal is to have a small school so that each student is well known and a differentiated curriculum can be applied.
- **Other innovative programs** – The school’s small size, K-8 structure, and strong family and community involvement components will lead to increased opportunities for implementing successful innovative programs

Our launch team members are currently working in various committees and jobs for the charter project. New members are always welcome. If you have questions or would like to join our charter launch team, please e-mail us at [mhcharterschool@yahoo.com](mailto:mhcharterschool@yahoo.com) or leave a message at (408) 782-1258. Visit [www.cde.ca.gov/charter](http://www.cde.ca.gov/charter) for general information about charter schools. The charter group’s site is [www.mhcharter.org](http://www.mhcharter.org).