

# Family Handbook



**2010-2011**

# **I. Welcome to the Charter School of Morgan Hill**

## **Welcome**

On behalf of the faculty, staff, families, students, and Board of Directors, I would like to welcome you and your child to a school community in pursuit of an excellent education for all children. This is a school based on the belief that families are their child's first and most important teacher and we look forward to working, learning and teaching with you. We deeply value the commitment you have made to send your child to a school of choice and to be a part of the Charter School of Morgan Hill community.

## **Brief History and Vision of CSMH**

A core group of educators, parents and community members dedicated thousands of hours to the planning, design and implementation of the Charter School of Morgan Hill, a process that began in February 2000. Early on, the founders identified the key elements of the school's mission. These are family involvement, project based learning and community interaction. The charter document, in which the school is referred to by its corporation name "South Valley Charter School", was unanimously approved by the Morgan Hill Unified School District Board of Trustees in January of 2001 and CSMH opened in August of 2001.

## **Handbook Use and Purpose**

This handbook is designed to help family members and students get acquainted with CSMH. It explains some of our philosophies, beliefs, structures, procedures, and policies. The school's discipline standards are based on the philosophy that student behavior should be the result of respect which students have for themselves, other people, and their environment. These standards establish a uniform set of behavioral expectations which apply to society as well as the school environment. They ensure that the school is a safe place to be, with the focus on student learning. Although this Handbook is not intended to be an official policy manual, we hope that it will serve as a useful reference to you while your child is enrolled at CSMH. Because CSMH is a growing and changing organization, this handbook will be revised and updated on an ongoing basis.

I hope that this handbook provides you with useful information about the programs, procedures and culture that make the Charter School of Morgan Hill a unique and positive option within the public school system. I welcome your ideas and comments regarding ways this handbook can be improved to increase its value to you, our families.

Paige Cisewski, Principal

## **II. CHARTER SCHOOLS IN GENERAL MISSION AND VISION OF CSMH**

### **Charter Schools – General Information**

Charter schools are nonsectarian public schools of choice. Charter schools were developed to allow for greater educational freedom from many of the restrictions placed on traditional public schools. The intent of charter schools is to increase learning opportunities for all pupils, to encourage different and innovative teaching methods, and to promote performance-based accountability in public schools. The "charter" document that establishes each such school is a contract detailing the school's mission, program, goals, students served, methods of assessment, and ways to measure the school's success.

The length of time for which charters are granted in California is five years. At the end of the term, the entity granting the charter may renew the school's contract. Charter schools are accountable to their sponsor, in our case, the Morgan Hill Unified School District, to produce positive academic results and adhere to the charter contract. The basic concept of charter schools is that they exercise increased autonomy in return for this accountability. They are accountable for both academic results and fiscal practices to several groups: the sponsor that grants them, the parents who choose them and the public that funds them.

### **Mission and Vision of the Charter School of Morgan Hill**

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

The School is 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 real-life activities through project-oriented programs
- providing advanced opportunities in science, technology, languages and the arts
- building programs that foster thinking which is original, critical, collaborative and reflective
- respecting diversity and whole child development - cognitive, emotional, social and physical

# III. SCHOOL INFORMATION, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

## Attendance

Attendance and participation in class are essential if the student is to gain the maximum benefit of the educational program. Regular and punctual school attendance of students is expected, encouraged and will be enforced. School attendance is an area which requires mutual cooperation among the school, the parents and the student so that the whereabouts of each student will be known at all times during the school day. Students may not arrive at school more than 20 minutes before the bell rings, since there is no supervision until that time. For the same reason, students must be picked up within 20 minutes after the school day ends.

## Absences

If your child will be absent for any reason, please call the school attendance line at (408) 463-0266 and leave a message. When leaving a message, please leave your child's name, grade, date (or dates if you there will be more than one), reason for absence, your name and relationship to the child. If we have not heard from you by 9:00 a.m., the office will begin calling to verify a child's absence. This is for the safety of your child.

An excused absence is only allowed for student illness, doctor/dentist appointments (with a note from the doctor or dentist), and death in the immediate family or quarantine. All other absences are considered unexcused.

When your child is absent for any reason, he/she is expected to make up the missed classroom assignments.

Students who expect to be absent from school for 3 days or more for any reason should obtain an independent study agreement (see below).

If your child comes down with a contagious illness, please notify the office immediately. We are required to send exposure notices to each family in the contagious child's class.

Consequences for unexcused absences are detailed below.

<b>Number of Unexcused Absences</b>	<b>Consequence</b>
<b>Five (5)</b>	Official notice from the School
<b>Eight (8)</b>	Intervention phone call and/or conference with student, parent, principal and other staff/professionals as appropriate
<b>Twelve (12)</b>	Conference with parents and principal and other appropriate personnel to develop a concrete plan to remedy the ongoing attendance issues

## Independent Study Agreements

If a child must be taken out of school for 3 days or more, parents should contact the school office to sign an Independent Study Agreement. This will be filled out by your child's teacher with all of the assignments your child will miss during his/her absence. The Independent Study and the completed work must be turned in the day the student returns.

## Tardies

It is very important that each student be on time to school and class each day. Promptness is not only a necessary courtesy to the teacher and other students but, more important, it assures the child of getting off to a good start each day. Students who arrive late not only lose valuable class time in the office waiting for a tardy pass but they miss out on the morning classroom activities. They also become an interruption to the classroom when they enter it late. Helping students to realize the importance of being on time is part of building good habits for life. Children should arrive before the 8:00 a.m. bell rings.

Tardiness is only excused if a student has a medical, dental, legal appointment (and brings a note from the appointment) or there has been a death in the family. All other tardies are considered unexcused.

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<b>Twelve (12)</b>	Conference with parents and principal and other appropriate personnel to develop a concrete plan to remedy the ongoing tardy problem

## Student Departures

We have been entrusted with the safety and overall care of your child. If it is necessary for your child to be released during the school day, you must first come to the office. The school secretary will call the student's classroom and have him/her sent to the office. The parent must then sign the student out. If someone other than the parent is picking up the student, a note identifying the person along with permission for us to release your child is needed. Upon his/her return, please check your child back into the office. These procedures are for your child's protection!

## **Visitations**

Parents are urged to visit the school. A phone call to schedule your visit is required and very much appreciated. Please call the teacher at least 24 hours in advance in order to schedule your visit. All visitors on campus must register in the office and obtain a visitor's badge before entering a classroom. If your child wishes to bring a "child visitor" to class, prior permission from your child's classroom teacher and principal must be obtained.

## **Volunteers**

Volunteers are asked to sign their names in the Volunteer Sign-In Book in the office upon arrival, obtain a volunteer badge and sign out upon leaving. This procedure is important so that we will know who is present in case of an emergency.

## **School Hours**

Regular school day hours:  
8:00 am – 2:45 pm

Minimum school day hours:  
8:00 am – 12:00 pm

## **Bicycle Safety**

Students riding bicycles to and from school must wear an authorized bicycle safety helmet. Students must walk bicycles on school grounds. The Charter School will not be responsible for bicycle security in the event of theft or damage.

## **Emergency Forms**

The school emergency form, completed by parents or guardians at the beginning of each school year, is a vital communication tool between parents/guardians and the school. A thorough completion of this card is essential in case of an emergency involving your child. Emergency information is kept in the school database and a copy is given to the classroom teachers. It is very important that you keep emergency information updated throughout the school year. If you change jobs or residence or if people listed on your emergency back-up list change phone numbers, please notify us immediately. Also be certain that people listed on the emergency form have been notified that they may be called upon to pick up your child in an emergency situation. If there is a restraining order forbidding contact of an individual with your child, legal custody orders, or parent custodial issues that the school needs to be aware of, a copy of such orders or an explanation of that situation should be submitted with the completed emergency card. When it is necessary for a student to be checked out of school during the school day, parents/guardians must sign the student out and may be asked to show identification.

## **Emergencies**

First Aid and accident procedures are followed by the Charter School staff. All accidents are reported to the office. Each teacher has a first aid kit in the classroom for minor injuries. Students with more serious injuries or illness are sent to the office. Parents will be called in any emergency situation. If a parent cannot be contacted, the person designated on the emergency card will be called.

## **Emergency School Closing**

In the event that school must be closed due to weather conditions or other emergencies, up-to-date information will be given to the following radio & television stations:

- KNTV - Channel 11
- KCBS, AM 740
- KGO, AM 810

We will also activate our emergency phone tree to get the information out to you.

## **Medication - General**

Federal and state laws support administration of medications to students while at school and require the following procedures.

All medications administered at school must be prescribed by a physician, licensed in California, even if they are purchased over the counter. The parent permission and physician authorization form (the "Permission to Administer Medication" form) must be completed for all medications, including those purchased over-the-counter. The student's physician must provide a written statement indicating the name of the medication, detailing the dose, method and time schedules by which the medication is to be taken.

In addition, the parent/guardian shall provide the medication in the original prescription container, clearly labeled with the student's name, medication, dosage and directions; or, in the case of an over-the-counter medication, in the original container. The parent/guardian must deliver the medication to the school personally or send it with a designated adult. It is the parent's responsibility to be certain the supply is available and that the child is aware of when he/she should receive medication.

Students are not allowed to carry medications. The only exception would be students with students with serious medical needs who are required by their physician to carry medication and self administer this medication under the supervision of school personnel. Parents must consult with the health clerk/Principal regarding these students.

## **Documentation**

Parents and physicians should complete the Permission to Administer Medication form and return it to the office. The student's form will be maintained with an individual medication log used to record medication dispensed at school. This log documents all medications administered to the student and serves as protection for both the school and the student. A copy of the Permission to Administer

Medication form will be kept in the student's Health Record. A new form must be completed for each school year and whenever there is a change in the medication dosage.

The school nurse or designated school employee will maintain a current, confidential list of students needing medication during regular school hours, including students with life-threatening conditions who carry injectable medication. This list shall be available on a need-to-know basis to appropriate school staff, along with emergency measures for allergic and anaphylactic reactions.

## **Illness**

If your child shows signs of not feeling well, please keep the child home and inform the office. Children should be kept home whenever they have a fever and within 24 hours after vomiting. If your child complains of feeling sick at school, depending on the severity, you may be contacted to pick him or her up from school.

Please notify the office immediately if your child becomes ill with a communicable disease, so that exposure notices can be sent home with the child's classmates.

## **Communicable Diseases**

Communicable diseases can spread quickly through a school and dramatically affect the attendance and learning of children. Examples of common communicable disease are conjunctivitis (pink eye), lice, strep throat, chicken pox, or ringworm. A student suspected of having a communicable disease may be excluded from school until guidelines for readmission are met.

## **Returning to School after an Illness or Prolonged Absence**

A student returning to school following a serious or prolonged illness, injury, surgery, or other hospitalization, must have written permission by a health care provider to attend school, including any recommendations regarding physical activity and exertion.

An excuse from physical education may be granted for up to 10 weeks if a student is unable to participate in regular or modified curriculum for a temporary period of time due to illness or injury. A parent's written request for an excuse will be accepted for up to five days; thereafter, a written request is needed from the student's health provider.

## **Hygiene**

As a part of coming to school "Ready to Learn," your child needs to come to school clean. Good hygiene for children includes brushing their teeth at least twice a day, bathing on a regular basis, and brushing or grooming their hair each day.

With older students, body odor can become an issue. Children will be active each day. Please do not hesitate to send antiperspirant or deodorant to school with your older students, if necessary.

Children can become the target of teasing and avoidance by other students if they come to school unclean. Please help your child develop good hygiene habits.

## **Sleep**

It is very important for your child to get the appropriate amount of sleep. As active, growing individuals, children require anywhere from 8 to 12 hours of sleep nightly. A routine is often helpful in making sure your child gets enough sleep. Please set a regular bedtime for your child and enforce it.

## **Health Standards and Immunizations**

To ensure a safe learning environment for all students, CSMH strictly follows and abides by the health standards set forth by the state of California. Students will not attend school until all required records have been received.

The immunization status of all students will be reviewed periodically. Those students who do not meet the State guidelines must be excluded from school until the requirements are met. Students who have been exposed to a communicable disease for which they have not been immunized may be excluded from school at the discretion of the school.

## **Health and Medical Conditions**

The school office and administrators must be notified if a student with a medical or health condition requires accommodations at school in order to participate in the educational program. The school administrator will arrange a meeting with the parent or guardian of the child to develop an accommodation plan for the student's medical or health condition.

## **Treatment of Injuries**

The school will treat minor injuries (scrapes, cuts, bruises, etc.) with basic first aid. Parents will be notified of minor injuries at the discretion of the school administrator.

When confronted with a more serious illness or injury, school staff will contact parents and, if necessary, will call 911.

## **Hearing, Vision and Scoliosis Examinations**

Hearing and vision exams and scoliosis screening will be performed according to state mandates.

## **Snack**

Students are responsible for bringing their own snack to school. We strongly promote healthy eating habits, especially limiting high sugar foods and all sodas, at CSMH.

## **Lost & Found**

Please label coats, sweaters, lunch boxes, etc. so that these items can be returned to their owners. The Lost and Found rack is located in the multipurpose room. Please check immediately upon losing an item. Unclaimed articles will be donated to charitable organizations prior to the winter holidays and again in June.

## **Drop-off/Pick-up Procedures**

### **General Do's and Don'ts**

- Do be patient
- Do drive slowly in the parking lot and use caution at all times
- Do use the appropriate entrances (Bailey light) and exits (north exit)
- Do drop off in designated areas only
- Do re-enter Monterey Road from the parking lot carefully. Enter only when it is clear. It is more important to enter safely than quickly.
- Do have your carpool sign displayed in your front window / on your front visor
- Do follow the instructions of the teachers directing traffic
- Do stay in your car and allow our helpers to assist with loading and unloading
- Do use the crosswalks at all times
  
- Don't ever drop off or pick up on Monterey Road
- Don't use the south entrance – this is the staff entrance
- Don't park in the neighbor's field
- Don't attempt to have conferences with the teachers on duty – schedule one at a more appropriate time
- Don't ever leave your car unattended in the drop off or pick up area

### **Morning Do's and Don'ts**

- Do come down the frontage road – if the frontage road is full please line up on both sides
- Do drive on the left side of the yellow line (European style)
- Do drive as far up as you can go in the unloading zone
- Do have your child ready to unload – shoes on, backpacks packed, goodbyes already said
  
- Don't pass – even if you want to park
- Don't let your children out on the frontage road (in the dirt) and then attempt to exit

### **Afternoon Do's and Don'ts**

- Do come down the frontage road
- Do line up in both lanes on the frontage road – every other car
- Do make sure your child knows their carpool name
- Do pull as far forward as you can in the loading zone – we will make sure the students get to your car
  
- Don't allow your child to go into the parking lot alone. They must be escorted by a parent to the parked car.

## **Student Assessment**

At CSMH, we believe a child can and should have the opportunity to demonstrate their learning in many ways. As a result, our assessments capture snapshots of performance, include written, oral, and visual media, demonstrate progress and development over time and include public demonstrations. CSMH assessments range from traditional measures (e.g. Standardized Tests given annually as required of all public schools) to alternative assessment tools. These alternative assessments include: performance tasks, portfolios of work (daily homework assignments, tests and quizzes, and reflections), exhibitions, and rubrics among others.

## **Report Cards**

Students receive report cards three times during the year: one during the fall conference period, one during the spring conference period, and one at the end of the school year.

## **Conferences**

Weeks dedicated for mandatory teacher/parent conferences are scheduled two times a year. The first conference week is scheduled in November and a second conference period is held in March. In both instances parents receive a written report about their child's progress. In addition, parents or teachers may request an additional meeting at any time during the school year should the need arise. Please keep in mind, that the more we know about your child, the better we are able to meet his/her needs. Never hesitate to contact us any time with information that will enable us to better understand and help your child.

## **Field Trips**

At CSMH, we believe field trips are an important part of project based learning and realistic connection to the greater community. The Bay Area has many resources to offer our children in respect to their learning.

A field trip is any planned journey for one or more students away from CSMH. Field trips are approved by the Principal.

The teacher/sponsor(s) shall provide parents and guardians with information concerning the purpose and destination of the trip, transportation, eating arrangements, date and time of departure, estimated time of return, arrangements for supervision, cost to the student, safety precautions (if high risk activity is involved), and a detailed itinerary when the field trip will extend beyond the school day. Teacher/sponsors will inform parents in advance about the recommended amount of spending money, if any, each student should have.

## **Permission Slips**

Field trips enrich our program. Attendance on the trips is voluntary, but if your child does attend, it is mandatory that a permission slip be signed by a parent or guardian. Students must have signed permission slips in order to go on field trips, including walking trips.

The Parent/Guardian Permission form must be signed and returned to the teacher before any student leaves the school building on a trip. Parental permission shall include written consent from parents/guardians authorizing the supervisors to arrange for necessary medical treatment. Permission received by telephone is not permitted. If a student does not have written permission, he/she will remain in a supervised area/classroom at CSMH until the class returns from the trip.

## **Field Trip Drivers**

Any parent who transports a child on a field trip must have signed a form stating that the driver has the following insurance coverage: Bodily Injury \$100,000 - \$300,000/ accident, Property Damage \$25,000/accident, Medical \$10,000, Single limit of \$300,000. This completed form must be on file in

the office before the parent may transport students. A copy of the license and insurance card are also required. Siblings of students should not accompany a class on field trips. If you are chaperoning a trip and absolutely need to bring a sibling along, please clear this with your child's teacher prior to the day of the trip.

## **Costs**

Field trips are taken at the discretion of the teacher in conjunction with the curriculum. Parents are asked to donate the student's share of trip expenses; however, scholarships are available for families unable to donate.

## **Class Assignments**

At Charter School, the staff carefully groups students to try to place each student in a situation that will be the most educationally beneficial to him or her. Classes are made up by the staff to be balanced and to take the following factors into consideration: boy-girl ratio, achievement levels, leadership, social factors, special needs, and behavior. Parent input about a child's particular needs is taken into consideration, but a request for a specific teacher should not be made. Parents may put any specific requests about the type of program that best suits his/her child's learning needs in writing and turn this information into the office.

## **Homework**

Homework will be assigned both to extend and reinforce the lessons taught at school or to research and/or support class project based learning. It is the responsibility of the parent to designate a time and place where the child may do his/her homework. Homework is also viewed as a bridge between home and school, giving students an opportunity to share their work with and involve family members. We expect students to share with their parents what they are learning. Developing a disciplined schedule and good study and work habits will be advantageous to any child. Students are expected to follow given directions, do work that is neat and turned in on time.

Parents are responsible for monitoring and assisting with homework assignments of their child. Each child should attempt to complete homework independently, but may need assistance. If your child needs assistance, please do not do his or her homework for him/her. As a parent, guide your child in doing the best that he or she can, allowing them to do their own work.

Each teacher will discuss the expectations for amount of time spent on homework and homework procedures on Back to School Night. If your child has difficulty with the homework, send the teacher a note so that the teacher can provide additional instruction if necessary.

## **Student Study Team**

The Charter School of Morgan Hill uses a Student Study Team approach to address any academic, grade placement, social, emotional, or attendance concerns brought to the team's attention via a written referral submitted by a staff member or parent. The purpose of this approach is to broaden the expertise available to help us evaluate issues that impact a child's overall school experience, and to develop a strategy, if appropriate to address the concerns.

There are two types of meetings that fall within the domain of SST. An informal SST meeting only involves Charter School personnel and usually the parent. A more formal SST meeting may include the school psychologist, RSP teacher, speech therapist and the parent.

## **Special Education**

At CSMH, we aim to have an inclusive model for our children with special needs. We believe the regular classroom is often the best environment for our special needs children to learn. Students with identified physical, emotional, learning, or developmental disabilities have the right to placement in the least restrictive environment and may receive special education services according to a written Individualized Education Plan (IEP). When it is necessary, we will work with the Morgan Hill Unified School District to provide special education services to our students.

## **Gifts and Donations**

CSMH is very fortunate to have extraordinarily generous families and community members and both the school and staff benefit from numerous gifts and donations on a regular basis. To avoid misunderstandings, the school has defined the difference between gifts and donations.

### **Gifts**

If you have a gift you would like to give to a teacher or staff member personally, than please personalize the gift (“To Mrs. Smith”) so that Mrs. Smith knows that it for her personal use and for her to take with her if and when she leaves the employment of the school.

### **Donations**

Many donations are given to be used for the education of the students. It is school policy that all donations given, including those for instructional use (books, equipment, resources or supplies), are the property of the school. This includes donations that are given through staff members. This ensures that the donation made remains available for the use of students at CSMH even if a staff member leaves the employment of the school. When making donations, it is helpful if you label the items with “CSMH”.

## **Friday E-folders**

Every Friday, an e-folder is sent out and posted on our website. This Friday e-folder contains important school information and the weekly classroom newsletter. Please read it over carefully. If you need a printed copy of the material please let the office and/or your classroom know.

## **The Principal’s “Paige”**

This is a newsletter sent home weekly in the Friday Folder. It is written by the principal and includes information about school programs and philosophy, upcoming events, important dates, and other pertinent information.

## **Classroom Newsletters**

Every week, you should receive a classroom newsletter. This letter will be full of important information such as projects students have been working on, upcoming learning objectives, assignment dates, ways to support your child at home, teacher needs, etc. The enrichment teachers will also send home a newsletter a minimum of four times a year to update you on what has been occurring in enrichment classes.

## **E-mail**

Each member of the staff and the Board of Directors has an assigned e-mail address to allow convenient communication between staff, parent and Board members. All e-mail addresses consist of the person's first initial and last name followed by csmh.org. You will find all e-mails listed in the School Directory.

## **School Directory**

The School Directory contains valuable information for parents and provides names, addresses, and phone numbers of the children. The information is for internal use only and your cooperation is requested in making sure this information is not misused. In addition, we request that all party invitations and social plans be made by mail or phone - not at school.

## **Phone Calls and Messages**

Emergency messages from parents to pupils at school will be handled promptly at any time. Routine plans for the day should be made known to the child before he/she leaves for school. This will assist the office and will eliminate classroom interruptions. The office phone is a business phone and students are not given permission to use it for making social plans

## **Complaints/Concerns**

We expect things to run smoothly. However, considering the large number of people involved in a community school environment, this is not always the case. Problems are best resolved through an open communication process and the Board of Directors has an adopted policy for handling such situations. Simply stated, the policy says that you should speak directly with the person involved before taking your complaint to other individuals. It is expected that you will contact the teacher, principal or appropriate staff member when the need arises.

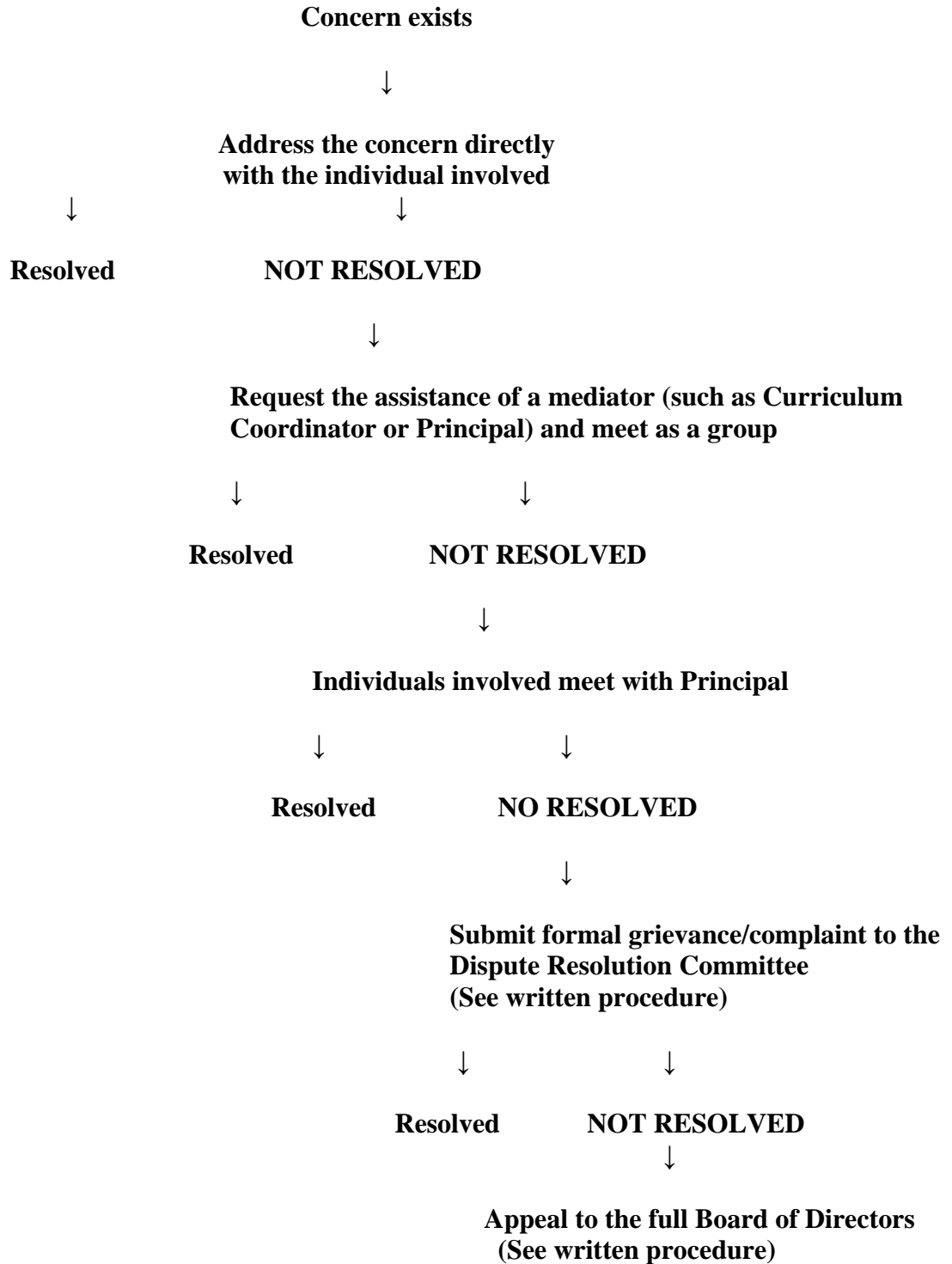
Using guidelines of listening to each other and working to resolve issues directly is very effective at resolving most conflicts in a way that can be mutually agreeable to the parties involved. It is also a mature and respectful process that does not contribute to the spread of rumors or gossip.

## **Resolution of Conflicts and Disputes**

If you have a concern regarding an employee at the school, and you have spoken to that person directly and have not been able to come to a mutually agreeable solution to the problem, please contact the principal or Curriculum and Instruction Coordinator (follow the Conflict Resolution Process flow

chart). If the situation is not addressed in a manner in which you are satisfied, you may file a formal grievance to the CSMH Board of Directors.

### **Conflict Resolution Process Flow Chart**



## **Formal Grievance/Complaint Procedures**

In the event of a dispute involving a family or student, and after a good faith effort with the person or people involved to thoroughly resolve the dispute via the Conflict Resolution Process, parents and/or students may submit their complaint following the procedures outlined below. The good faith effort will include problem identification, possible solutions, selection of resolution, timeline for implementation, and follow-up. A written summary of the good faith effort will be included in the student's file. Failure to follow the procedures and timelines below constitutes a waiver of the parent or student's right to grieve.

### **Grievance Filing Process**

The parent or student may submit his/her grievance in writing to the Chair of the Dispute Resolution Committee (a subcommittee of the Board of Directors) within five days of a failed good faith effort to resolve the dispute.

Within ten working days of receipt of the written complaint, the Dispute Resolution Committee shall schedule a hearing at a mutually convenient time and place for discussion of the complaint with all parties involved, but in no event later than 20 days after receipt of the written complaint and after notification to the parent and/or student. Dispute Resolution Committee members who are interested parties shall excuse themselves from grievance proceedings if such members have a conflict of interest in the subject of the proceedings.

A decision as established by a majority vote of the members of the Dispute Resolution Committee hearing the grievance shall be rendered within five working days of the completion of the hearing. Any such proceedings shall be conducted in closed session, unless requested otherwise by the parent or student. In the event that additional information, investigation, or hearings are necessary after the initial hearing, the hearing may be continued and the final decision shall be made within five working days of the last committee hearing, or as soon thereafter as is practical.

The decision of the Dispute Resolution Committee shall be final unless appealed by the parent or student to the full Board of Directors, which may review and modify the decision of the Dispute Resolution Committee if it finds that the Committee failed to properly follow the grievance process described above. A request for an appeal must be submitted to the President of the Board within five days of the decision of the Dispute Resolution Committee. After receiving an appeal request, the President shall schedule a meeting to consider such an appeal as soon as practical. Board members, who are interested parties, shall excuse themselves from reviews of Dispute Resolution Committee decisions to the extent permitted under law. Any such proceedings shall be conducted in closed session, unless requested otherwise by the parent and/or student.

## **Additional Programs and Opportunities**

### **Art and Music**

Students in grades K-6<sup>th</sup> will receive art instruction once a week for the entire year for 40 minutes. Students in K-4<sup>th</sup> will receive music instruction once a week for the entire year for 40 minutes. The 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students will have an opportunity to choose a musical instrument and receive music instruction once or twice a week. Art and music is also incorporated in the middle school elective program.

### **Spanish Instruction**

Students in K-2nd grades will receive Spanish three times a week for 30 minutes. Students in 3rd-6th will receive Spanish three times a week for 40 minutes. Middle school students will receive Spanish every day for a minimum of 45 minutes.

### **Physical Education**

Students in K-2nd grades will receive P.E. three times a week for 30 minutes and students in 3rd-5th will receive P.E. three times a week for 40 minutes. Middle school students will receive physical education three times a week for a minimum of 45 minutes.

### **Agriculture Science**

All students at the school will have the opportunity to participate in our agriculture science program sometime during the school year. This program provides many wonderful hands-on experiences in our gardens and extended opportunities in science.

### **Library**

Charter's library has books and resource materials available to students in many subject areas. Each class has scheduled library time each week where students are introduced to good literature, storytelling and research skills.

### **Student Council**

Charter's student government is handled by the student council. Representatives from each classroom meet with a faculty advisor.

### **Counseling**

A counselor works on the Charter School campus two days per week. The counselor works with children in small groups and/or individually. Parent permission is required for your child to see our counselor. The counselor will always make contact with you about your child. Students may be referred by parents, teachers or they may be self referred. At times, interns may also be used to enhance our counseling program.

## **Sports Programs**

CSMH is a member of the San Benito Athletic League and offers opportunities for middle school students to participate in team sports competitively against other schools.

## **Other Programs**

There are a number of other sports and leadership opportunities available to Charter School students and more are being added all the time!!

## **Birthdays**

Birthdays may be observed by parents arranging in advance with the teacher to bring a class snack which is usually eaten at recess. We also encourage families to donate a book to the school library in honor of the child's birthday.

We ask that birthday party invitations not be distributed at school. Students should not bring birthday presents to school for a party that they will be attending after school. These private events should be handled away from school.

# IV. SCHOOL RULES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS

We have very few problems at Charter because we do take time to help children understand the need for rules. In general all children are encouraged to think about their safety and the safety of others and behave in a respectful manner toward everyone at school.

## Behavior Expectations

At CSMH we value:

- Being respectful of ourselves, others and our environment
- Taking responsibility for our actions
- Being an active listener
- Doing our personal best
- Being prepared to learn
- Being resourceful problem-solvers
- Safety of Self and Others

In order to ensure that CSMH is a place where learning is a priority, the school must be safe at all times. Any student action or intention that can be deemed as violating the safety of oneself or others can result in serious consequences. Examples of safety violations include:

- Verbal abuse of others (using profanity, bullying, making fun, teasing etc.)
- Intentionally hurting another person
- Rough-housing during school activities
- Threatening others' physical or emotional safety

## Student Accountability

Students should be aware of possible consequences of their behavior. Disciplinary action taken by school officials is a direct consequence of unacceptable behavior by a student. Rules and regulations are established to maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning. Students are required to comply with the regulations, pursue the required courses of study, and submit to the authority of the teachers at the school. Students who fail to comply with these rules and regulations may be counseled, reprimanded, suspended, expelled, and/or arrested as the laws are applied and dependent on the situation.

Extracurricular activities are considered a part of the educational program. Participants and spectators carry responsibilities as representatives of their schools/communities. All rules of student conduct also apply to extracurricular activities.

## Conflict Resolution

CSMH students are taught the appropriate steps for resolving conflicts effectively and expressing their feelings openly starting at the kindergarten level. Training in conflict management has been provided to teachers. Students receive training in the use of the following steps:

Stop and cool off

Choosing a solution

Communicate and listen  
Identify feelings  
Understanding the problem  
Empathy  
Brainstorm solutions  
Problem solving

Make a plan and implement it  
Applying strategies  
Anger management  
Reducing labeling and stereotyping  
Dealing with peer pressure

## **Academic Honesty**

All students will complete their academic work without cheating. If a student is caught cheating, that student will be disciplined.

## **After School Sports (middle school)**

Participants must maintain at least a 2.0 grade point average and may not be on Academic Probation. Appropriate behavior is required at all times during practice, games and meets. Respect toward coaches, parents, teammates, opposing teams and officials are expected. Failure to show such behavior will result in dismissal from the team and possible discipline and/or consequences.

## **Dress Code**

For health and safety reasons, as well as to help students focus on learning, students shall dress and groom themselves in a way that is appropriate for school. The Charter School shall ensure that clothing, hair, makeup, and/or personal appearance is not a disturbance or cause of school distraction, disruption, or unsafe conditions.

- Clothing that is modest (or worn modestly), non-distracting, and safe and appropriate grooming for school will be defined in the following manner.
- Clothing is clean and free of body odor
- Clothing does not include bathing suits, biking or jogging shorts, sleeping attire, clinging or transparent attire, sagging or excessively oversized clothing
- Skirts are mid-thigh or longer in length when the student is seated and must be the length of the extended fingertip when student is standing
- Pants are worn at the waist and no undergarments are exposed
- Tops that are long enough to touch the waistband of skirts or pants when the student is standing and arms are held straight out from the shoulders; or the student is wearing two layers of upper body clothing and the layer next to the skin meets the requirement
- Tops that are at least an inch wide at both shoulders, and do not depend upon ties at either the shoulders or the back of the neck to secure the garment
- Tops that completely cover undergarments/bra straps
- Tops that are not scooped low in the front, back, or armholes
- Clothing (including hats, belts, accessories or buttons) that is without graphics, logos, pictures, or writing that depict or promote violence, hate, weapons, drugs, tobacco, alcoholic beverages, gangs, sex, or any other conduct or product that would be against school rules if the student were to personally engage in that type of behavior while at school
- Tops that are not appropriate because of printed material as described above will be worn inside-out for the remainder of day or the student will be provided with a clean oversized tee

shirt for the day, which must be laundered and returned the next day to the office. (Students will not be allowed to call a parent for a “rescue effort.”)

- Flat, close-toed shoes without steel toes are required for safety reasons and for physical education activities. Shoes that are “strappy sandals” or shoes with high heels (platform or spike) are not appropriate for school.
- Students with unsafe shoes will not be allowed to play during recesses and PE.
- Hats or other headgear may be worn only outside of school buildings.
- Hair should be clean. Hair care products (spray, gel, mousse) are not permitted at school.
- Students may not bring nail polish or nail polish remover to school.
- Perfume, fragrances, and makeup may not be brought to school.
- Roll-on or stick deodorant may be brought to school for use by older students (PLEASE!)

## **Office Referrals**

If a student violates any of the rules pertaining directly to students (dress, absence, tardiness, homework, safety of self and others, respect of property, behavior expectations), they may be referred to the office at the discretion of the teacher. Depending upon the specific circumstances surrounding the student’s behavior, a student may remain in the office for a “time out” period, and an appropriate consequence will be devised. Depending on the violation, a student’s parent or guardian may be called.

## **Respect for Property**

Building upon the need to have a safe and nurturing school, students must respect the property of the school and of others at all times. Any student action or intention that can be deemed as damaging the property of the school or of others can result in serious consequences. Examples of property violations include:

- Stealing
- Defacing school property or the property of others
- Unauthorized use of equipment
- Inappropriate use of the internet

## **Personal Property and Money**

We encourage children at Charter to use equipment and supplies available at school. Toys or money should not be brought except when specifically requested for a special occasion (field trip, special food sale, etc.). Objects of educational value or special significance should be chosen for sharing. Please label any items which are brought. Personal property not related to the school’s programs are not to be brought to school. Toys, trading cards, “I Pods”, CD Players, Game Boys or other electronic games, pagers, cell phones, etc. will be confiscated and returned to the child’s parent at the end of the school day or another appropriate time if they are brought to school. The Charter School shall not assume responsibility for theft, loss, or damage to any of the above mentioned items. Chewing gum is also prohibited.

## **Student Violence and Reporting Requirements**

The school will not tolerate student threats, acts of violence, or jokes of violence.

The welfare of our students requires that the school be notified immediately of potential security risks.

You must immediately notify your Principal, teacher, or other school employee:

- when a person is acting in a suspicious manner in or around the school,
- when you know, suspect, or have heard that an individual has a weapon or dangerous object at school,
- when you know, suspect, or have heard of any violent or potentially violent incidents, threats, jokes of threats or violence, or concerns of a risk for violence or other disturbance,
- when you believe the school is otherwise not secure or safe.

The school will investigate and discipline students who breach this policy, up to and including suspension and/or expulsion.

## **Suspension**

A teacher may suspend any pupil from his/her class for the day of the suspension and the day following. The teacher shall immediately report the suspension to the Principal of the school and send the pupil to the Principal for appropriate action.

The Principal or his/her designee may suspend a student from class, classes, or the school premises for a period not to exceed five days unless the Principal recommends expulsion and/or the Principal or designee extends the suspension.

The Principal or his/her designee may extend the student's suspension pending final Board of Directors' decision on a recommendation for expulsion.

A school employee shall make a reasonable effort to contact the student's parent or guardian in person or by telephone at the time of the suspension.

# **V. PROJECT BASED LEARNING – The What? The Why? The How?**

## **What is Project Based Learning?**

Project Based Learning, or PBL, is a teaching methodology based on the theory that people create knowledge for themselves based on their experiences. This is the learning that occurs, for example, when students actively engage in solving real life problems. They use what they know to explore, interpret, and create meaning from this experience. Then they reflect upon and share their knowledge with others. In PBL, the learning process is as important as the end product. At CSMH, one product of our PBL projects is the acquisition of appropriate grade level knowledge as defined by the California State Educational Standards.

## **Why are we a PBL school?**

Project Based Learning supports the mission of the Charter School of Morgan Hill: 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.

## **Is Project Based Learning more than just “doing projects”?**

The idea of doing projects for hands-on learning has been in existence for a long time! John Dewey’s research showed educators that active exploration leads to a better understanding of concepts. In the last 25 years, research in psychology and neuroscience has indicated that more effective learning takes place when students can relate new information to past experiences, their community, and their culture.

Project Based Learning was developed in response to this research and focuses on the “Six A’s,” each a key component of an effective project:

- Authentic - A “real life problem” exploration, driven by an authentic question.
- Academic Rigor - An interdisciplinary, standards-based investigation.
- Active Exploration - A resource-based, collaborative, constructive investigation.
- Autonomy - An investigation driven by students, generating self-reliance.
- Assessment Practices - An incorporation of provisions for on-going reflection, confirmation of understanding, and direction of instruction.
- Alliances and connections with others - An incorporation of parents, teachers, community members, and students to provide support for student efforts to answer questions or solve problems posed by driving questions.

## **An example of PBL at a primary level:**

In a more traditional classroom, students study ants by making a playdough model showing an ant’s body parts as a project, reading a story and singing songs about ants to fulfill life science state standards. In a PBL classroom, students work at a deeper level to answer the question, “Why are ants everywhere?” Students observe and map ant trails at school, home and in their community. They research how ants travel, where they come from, how they live and what are they looking for! They

draw conclusions about ants as helpers and pests. Students are challenged to think critically and come up with solutions to keeping ants out of our classrooms!

### **An example of PBL at a middle school level:**

At a traditional school, students would be told to open their textbooks, read a chapter about the westward movement during the 1800's, and answer the questions at the end of the chapter. The objective of this lesson would be to learn the facts so they could do well on the test.

Students learning about westward movement in a PBL classroom are challenged to gather information from a variety of resources, including technology to answer the driving question "How did the slogan 'Go West, Young Man, Go West!' change your life?" Research is done to find out the reasons why people came west. Students are encouraged to come up with creative ways to address the challenge of the driving question. The focus is more on understanding the reason for westward movement, than on learning a collection of facts. Assessments include tests, journal entries, a model, a debate, a web page, and/or a dramatic interpretation.

### **Do my children do only PBL at school? Will they use textbooks?**

Project Based Learning is the fundamental educational philosophy of the Charter School of Morgan Hill. Traditional teaching methods are also respected, however, and are utilized as supplemental techniques for the reinforcement, clarification, and practice of concepts encountered during Project Based Learning.

Since CSMH is committed to being a resource based school, traditional textbooks will not be used for every subject because PBL is authentic, active learning. In PBL, as in real life, your children may consult many different sources to acquire information to make decisions and solve problems. The resources used in PBL may include the Internet, interviews, original documents, and audiovisual media. Children at the elementary or middle school level who are acquiring core knowledge and fundamental principles will also use textbooks and receive direct, traditional instruction.

### **How can I support PBL at home?**

You can model the 6 A's at home when you:

- Ask your children questions and challenge them to explain their thinking.
- Enlist your children's help in solving real problems in your home.
- Help your children to make connections between the things they learn in school and their daily lives.
- Watch documentaries with your children, go to the library, explore a creek, go on a hike, or make something together.
- Give children choices whenever possible, and live with their decisions.
- Allow children to make mistakes and learn from them. Let them live with the consequences! Don't solve their problems for them.
- Encourage children to be involved in their communities through school, neighborhood, city, club, and religious affiliations.
- Value your children for who they are, where they are in life, and the contributions they can make!

## **How is the Charter School of Morgan Hill doing in fulfillment of its mission?**

The Charter School of Morgan Hill is a school of choice where we strive to provide a specific, positive alternative to the traditional public school. It will be the right environment for some students, some parents, and some teachers. It will not be right for everyone.

Our Charter School community continues to learn more about Project Based Learning and how to make it work for us. Our staff, parents, and students are committed to this process. We have defined our mission and our methods, and we will continue to progress to meet the high expectations we have for ourselves. At CSMH we believe our students, parents, and teachers can be described as collaborative risk takers, life-long learners, problem solvers, and active, productive, motivated citizens working together in fulfillment of our mission.

# **VI. GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

## **Governance Structure**

The Charter School of Morgan Hill is run by a non-profit corporation called South Valley Charter School that has its own bylaws and governing board with members elected by parents and staff of CSMH. The seven member Board consists of an administrative representative, a staff representative, two parent representatives, and three community representatives. Except for the Administrative member, Board terms are two years.

## **Relationship to MHUSD**

Every charter school must have a charter-granting agency that is responsible for providing oversight to the charter school. Morgan Hill Unified School District is our charter-granting agency. MHUSD has its own Board of Trustees, but its interaction with us is minimal. We are accountable to MHUSD to demonstrate that we are operating in a manner that is fiscally and educationally responsible, and we do contract with the district for some services.

## **Role of the Board versus Role of the Administration (not all-inclusive)**

The Board of Directors is responsible for adopting and updating policies consistent with the law and the mission of the school, for providing direction to the Administration relating to policies, for maintaining accountability for student learning by monitoring student progress, for hiring, evaluating and supporting the Principal, for adopting a fiscally responsible budget and monitoring it regularly.

The Administration (i.e. the Principal) is responsible for the oversight of all the day-to-day operations of the school, for overseeing the development of educational programs that are consistent with the mission and vision of the school, for hiring staff, for monitoring student progress, for the development and implementation of procedures that comply with Board adopted policy, for working with the Board as a governance team, for making recommendations to the Board based on background that has been thoughtfully researched and considered.

# VII. FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AT CSMH

## Philosophy

It is proven by prominent education research that when parents or family members are involved at school in the education of their child, the child's success in school dramatically increases. We seek to create a school environment that invites family participation and involvement and that works as a community united in a common purpose. In order to create a strong school community where every child can reach his or her fullest potential, each family must be involved at the school.

Just as we view each child as a unique individual, we also see each family as a unique partner in their child's education. Just as each child has his or her strengths and challenges, so does each family. With this belief, CSMH has a variety of ways for families to be involved.

## Family Participation Agreement

The school offers numerous opportunities to be involved and will communicate details to parents. Every family is expected to identify ways that parents will participate throughout the school year. It is understood that the level of family participation will vary from family to family and from year to year. The school's goal is that every parent is able to find ways to be involved that are meaningful and enriching to him/her, that also help the school provide the best possible educational environment for the students.

## School, family and student commitments to each other:

By making the decision to enroll in a public school of choice such as the Charter School of Morgan Hill, parents and students are also making the decision to support the mission and vision of the school. The school also makes commitments to the students and their families. The following was taken directly from the school's charter document, Appendix C.

### 1. The school's commitment to the student and family.

The school:

- Agrees to maintain a commitment to the school's mission and vision.
- Agrees to actively participate in collaborative decision making and consistently work with students, families and colleagues to make the school accessible and welcoming for all.
- Agrees to provide a learning environment that is mentally, emotionally, socially and physically safe and supportive.
- Agrees to communicate regularly with families about student progress.
- Agrees to provide or support educational opportunities for families.
- Agrees to provide ongoing professional development opportunities for staff that improve teaching and learning and support the formation of partnerships with families and the community. This will include training in working with families and volunteers.
- Agrees to provide information to families about ways to support the child at home
- Agrees to assist with educational or personal improvement opportunities (i.e. providing and/or finding translation services, assisting in finding adult education courses, offering parent support groups, assisting in finding and receiving needed health and/or social services, helping establish community connections).

- Agrees to respect the school, students, staff and families.

## 2. The student's commitment to the family and the school.

The student:

- Agrees to come to school prepared to learn, participate and work to the best of his or her ability.
- Agrees to be responsible for necessary materials and completed assignments.
- Agrees to know and follow class and school rules.
- Agrees to communicate regularly with family and teachers about school experiences.
- Agrees to respect the school, classmates, staff and families.

## 3. The family commitment to the child.

The family:

- Agrees to be informed about the student's studies.
- Agrees to be available to the student for support or assistance as needed.
- Agrees to assist the student in taking responsibility for his or her studies.
- Agrees to regular communication with the student's teacher.
- Agrees to participate in educational opportunities as offered by the school or pursue an alternative
- Agrees to respect the school, staff, students and families.

Partial list of ways the family can support the child:

- assisting with the formation of a study routine
- providing a time, place and materials necessary for successful studying
- making organizational suggestions such as putting the backpack in the same place every night
- reinforcing positive effort and attitude
- checking homework daily
- read all information sent home from the school and respond as necessary
- ensure that student is well rested and is provided with a nutritional diet

## 4. The family commitment to the school.

The family:

- Agrees to support the needs of the school as specified in its family participation agreement.
- Agrees to respect the school, staff, students and families

## **Why doesn't CSMH have a traditional Home and School Club?**

Traditional Home and School Clubs are voluntary organizations that work to support the needs of a school. Since our volunteer structure is extensive and all CSMH families are expected to be involved in the school working together to support the needs of the school, the need for a separate Home and School Club-type structure is eliminated.

## **If/when parents don't participate, what will the school do?**

The school has basic expectations for parents, i.e. attending school functions, attending conferences, ensuring that homework is complete and that students arrive at school ready to learn. If parents do not meet these expectations, they will receive a call from the teacher and/or principal. A meeting may be scheduled to discuss the mission and vision of the school, the parent participation commitment and whether or not CSMH is the best school for the family. Chronic non-participants may be referred to the Board of Directors to have their membership in the corporation suspended or revoked.