

Freshwater Charter Middle School

Mission Statement

The Freshwater Charter Middle School provides a safe, caring, student-centered environment for 7th and 8th graders, focused on dynamic, engaging and rigorous learning, so that our students will be well prepared for future academic success and responsible citizenship.

Freshwater Charter Middle School

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Charter Update: February 23, 2004



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I. School Vision

Freshwater Charter Middle School provides a unique education choice for seventh and eighth grade students in Humboldt County. FCMS is a classroom-based school located on the Freshwater School District campus.

The following principles guide the education philosophy of Freshwater Charter Middle School:

1. Every student has the right to feel safe and secure.
2. Every student deserves the best that a school has to offer.
3. Every student can achieve academic excellence through a challenging curriculum accompanied by appropriate support.
4. Every student can be a responsible, productive citizen, willing to give of his/her talents to the community.

Therefore, Freshwater Charter Middle School will:

- Provide a positive, safe, caring environment, which nurtures the intellectual, physical, emotional, and moral capacities of each child, so that each child can lead a fulfilling life as a contributing member of society.
- Develop, implement and continue to update a student-centered, integrated curriculum addressing the modalities, strengths, and social development of each student.
- Provide a successful educational program for each student that considers his/her unique needs, abilities, and cultural background.
- Provide and encourage families with opportunities to participate and share in the educational growth of their children.
- Enable students to become self-motivated, competent, and lifelong learners.

II. Educational Program

Freshwater Elementary School (K-6) provides a nurturing learning environment with high expectations for its students. The Freshwater Charter Middle School will serve students who desire, and would benefit from the same type of environment as an alternative to a large junior high school. FCMS is an appropriate placement for a 7th grader who is willing to work cooperatively with others, interested in contributing to an interactive community, excited about exploring subject matter through creative and innovative methods of learning, and willing to work to attain challenging individual academic goals.

For our students to be successful in their future, they will need to:

1. communicate well verbally, in writing, and through technological means;
2. work well independently;
3. be able to collaborate with diverse groups of people;
4. know how to find information;
5. think creatively and logically in order to solve problems and make decisions;
6. respect differences; and
7. take considered risks.

The educational program is based on the State Frameworks in each academic area, presented to the students through hands-on active learning and projects that integrate the subject areas. This educational program is combined with the preparation to become an independent and responsible adult. The educational program will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- **Small Classes** in which personal attention is a daily occurrence, individual needs can be readily addressed, and no one's needs will be ignored or forgotten. In order to provide individual attention, the preferred maximum class size is 24 students. The principal and staff will meet and discuss options before enrolling more students than 24 in either grade.
- **Strong Home-School Connection** that invites parents to visit and volunteer in classes, participate in school activities, and contact instructional staff as needed.
- **Rigorous Academic Standards** that build on skills acquired in earlier grades; which combine high academic expectations with support and guidance from our dedicated staff.
- **Technology program** in which weekly access to our on-site 20 station Internet-connected computer lab teach workplace skills such as Power Point, web site design, advanced research and word processing.
- **Innovation In Curriculum:** student-centered and participatory; with
 - field trips and hands-on projects connecting school with the work world;
 - knowledge applied in projects and public presentations; electives for both grade levels offered to every student during the winter and spring trimesters;
 - community-based and service oriented projects;

- flexibly scheduled time to accommodate large projects and special opportunities;
 - a combination of independent learning and cooperative learning to develop skills in personal responsibility, collaboration and perseverance;
 - community partnerships to enable students to more fully explore topics and career options;
 - teachers who assume the role of facilitator and mentor for student learning, as well as more traditional roles as needed;
 - arts integrated into the academic curriculum; world languages taught in both grades;
 - physical education based on development of physical strength and agility, knowledge about health issues, and establishing habits for life-long fitness.
- **Social Development** in which students can mature at their own pace in a highly supportive environment;
 - * critical issues such as self-image, media influence and prejudice are discussed and handled with sensitivity in a safe, small classroom setting;
 - * the multi-age campus provides numerous opportunities for cross-age tutoring and mentoring, benefiting both younger and older children
 - * social time before and after school offers students the opportunity to build friendships and confidence.
 - * participation in sports as well as non-competitive programs (rafting, ropes course, music, class meeting) encourages team work, cooperation, and conflict resolution.
 - * social events provide opportunity for important growth and learning about appropriate interaction, and build friendships.

III. Student Outcomes and Measuring Student Progress

Student outcomes are designed to showcase the student's skills, knowledge, and attitude. Students demonstrate increased skills in reading, writing, mathematical concepts, computation, and problem solving, oral communication, science, history-social studies, and the use of technology to acquire and communicate information. Expectations are high with the goal of all students successfully working at or above grade level. Students participate in the World of Work program, sharing that commitment to their community by volunteering their time, energy, and compassion. Students, parents and teachers will engage in respectful dialogue and forge strong working relationships.

A portfolio of student-generated work is used, along with grades, to show the student's progress toward academic goals and standards. An interdisciplinary project is offered to eighth grade students to highlight the student's individual interests. While pursuing the project goals, the student is supported by faculty, district staff and community mentors.

Student progress is measured in several ways beginning with evaluations three times a year. Initially, the teacher will set learning goals for the entire class by modeling, motivating, describing expectations, and demonstrating a variety of strategies to achieve goals. Twice a year, the

teachers will offer a formal parent-teacher-student conference. Careful evaluation of student work on an ongoing basis, including comments to help the student on future assignments, is shared with students and parents. A final evaluation takes place at the end of the year. Grades given indicate the extent to which a student has progressed toward goals and standards.

A portfolio of student work and interdisciplinary projects, described above, are also used to measure student progress. The California State testing results will meet or exceed the achievement of the local traditional junior high schools.

At the school level, attendance and punctuality will be monitored carefully to insure that the maximum amount of time will be spent working toward educational goals. Additionally, an evaluation of behavior problems school wide (number of problems which are worked through and solved, the severity of problems) will demonstrate the maintenance of an optimum positive learning environment.

IV. Admission to the Charter

Any student in the Freshwater School District may choose to attend the Freshwater Charter Middle School. Remaining openings will be available to students from other districts based on the following order:

1. Students not residing in the Freshwater School District who previously attended Freshwater Elementary School in at least the fifth and sixth grades.
2. Any other student.

Prior to admission, all parents/guardians and students will be required to sign a parent/student compact indicating that they understand the Freshwater Charter Middle School philosophy and program, and are committed to achieving the goals of the School.

There will be no admissions tests, no tuition, nor any discrimination against any applicant on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability or socio-economic status. After students are enrolled who live in the Freshwater School District, should there be more Category #1 enrollees than open placements, FCMS will use “open public drawing” system for selecting students who will attend the school. [Education Code 47605.6 (2)(A)(B)]

Alternate placement: Students residing in Freshwater School District who choose a traditional junior high program may attend one of the local schools serving grades 7 and 8 as an alternative to attending Freshwater Charter Middle School.

Racial, ethnic and socioeconomic balance: FCMS reflects the population of the Freshwater School District and Humboldt County. If at some time, the student population of FCMS does not reflect the population of the Freshwater School District, the Freshwater Charter Middle School Council will design and implement a plan of action to achieve racial and ethnic balance.

V. Health and Safety of Students

The Freshwater Charter Middle School will comply with the provisions of Education Code 44237 **Private School Instruction Employee: Fingerprints and Criminal Records**

Summary Requirements: Definitions. Each new employee having a contact with minor pupils and not possessing a valid California teaching credential must submit two sets of fingerprints to the Department of Justice for the purpose of obtaining a criminal record summary. This requirement is a condition of employment. Employees new to Freshwater School District and Freshwater Charter Middle School may be required to take a pre-employment physical, to include TB screening.

Freshwater Charter Middle School will follow all Freshwater School District policies in regards to immunizations, administration of prescription drugs and other medicines, and response to natural disasters and emergencies. The Charter School will comply with the Education Code regarding student suspension or expulsion for use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco.

VI. Suspensions or Revoking Charter Enrollment

The Freshwater Charter Middle School shall seek all avenues within its means to provide opportunities for student improvement when concerns arise.

At level one, such alternatives may include, but are not limited to, parental involvement, counseling (adult and peer), and student developed goals for improvement.

At level two, the student, parent and teacher will develop an improvement plan. This plan shall include specific areas in need of improvement, a way to measure that improvement and a specific time frame for this to occur. This plan will be signed by the student, parent and teacher. If the goals in these areas are not met, the student will move to level three.

At level three, the student will be placed on probation for a period to be mutually agreed upon by the student, parent, teacher and principal. If, during this period, the improvement plan is not adhered to, the student's right to attend Freshwater Charter Middle School maybe revoked.

VII. Governance Structure

The Freshwater Charter Middle School will be governed by the Charter School Council. This Council will operate under the supervision and authority of the Freshwater School District Board of Trustees.

The Charter School Council membership will consist of:

1. The Charter School Faculty
2. At least three Parents/Guardians of attending students
3. The Freshwater School District Principal/Superintendent
4. At least one Freshwater Elementary School Teacher
5. At least one Student from each class of the Charter School
6. One Freshwater School Board Member.

The person facilitating the meeting shall be selected by the Council at the beginning of each meeting. The Council shall choose a secretary (or two co-secretaries) responsible for meeting minutes during the year. Meeting agendas will be prepared by the Faculty and School Principal, with input from students, parents/guardians, community members, and/or Board members.

The Freshwater Charter Middle School Council will meet a minimum of six times per year, or as needed. Charter Middle School Council decisions will be made by a consensus¹.

The duties and responsibilities of the Freshwater Charter Middle School Council, Charter Faculty and Principal include, but are not limited to, the following:

Freshwater Charter Middle School Council

1. Developing annual goals for the school with input from the Freshwater School District Board of Trustees.
2. Receiving reports from, and providing recommendations to the Charter Middle School faculty.
3. Assessing goals, objectives, achievements, financial status, and any need for redirection.
4. Approving the yearly budget and any new fiscal expenditures not in the original budget that would represent more than a 5% change in any budget category (such as 1000's, 2000's, 3000's, etc.).
5. Preparing, with the FCMS teachers, students, parents and principal, an annual assessment of the educational program of the Freshwater Charter Middle School and presenting it to the Board of Trustees.

¹ Saint, Steven and Lawson, James, Rules for Reaching Consensus, Jossey-Bass Pfeiffer Publishers, San Francisco, 1994.

Charter Middle School Faculty

1. Directing, developing and implementing curriculum in compliance with the guiding philosophy of Freshwater Charter Middle School.
2. Coordinating community projects with the curriculum of the school.
3. Organizing a variety of parent involvement options or activities.
4. Making recommendations and suggestions on policy and fiscal expenditures to the Charter Middle School Council and Freshwater School District Board of Trustees.
5. Working closely with the Principal to ensure the well-being of both schools, their staffs and students.
6. Implementing the annual Plan of Action designed by the School Council.

Freshwater Charter Middle School Principal

1. Supervising the day-to-day operation and administration of the school, including supervision of all staff members.
2. Working closely with the Charter Middle School Faculty to ensure the well-being of the school, the staff and students.
3. Evaluating all certificated personnel at Freshwater Charter Middle School; working with the certificated staff to evaluate the instructional aides.
4. Taking action as necessary on all confidential matters.
5. Working with faculty to monitor students at Level 3 (see Item VI “Suspensions and/or Revoking Enrollment”).
6. Facilitating the preparation and editing of the annual report to the Board of Trustees.

The Charter School is nonsectarian in its programs, admission policies, employment practices, and all other operations. The Charter School does not charge tuition and does not discriminate against any pupil on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, or socio-economic status.

VIII. Employee Qualifications and Rights

Teachers in the Freshwater Charter Middle School must be credentialed under current laws, including No Child Left Behind. Multiple subject credentials are more appropriate to the block teaching style and integrated curriculum approach of FCMS. However, single subject credential holders with appropriate coursework in other subjects may be considered for teaching positions.

All employees must meet the standards as set by current law, such as required credentials for certificated employees, TB tests on file with the District for all employees, and at least two years of college education for instructional aides.

Current Employees of Freshwater School District who subsequently become employees of the Freshwater Charter Middle School will enjoy all the benefits as other Freshwater School District employees in similar positions.

Short-term and Temporary Employees may be recommended for employment by the Freshwater Charter Middle School for a period not to exceed one school year following the established procedures for Freshwater School District. Remuneration, terms and conditions for these employees will be mutually agreed upon by the prospective employee and Freshwater School District.

New Employees who are not defined above must meet employee standards for Freshwater School District and, if their job title is included in one of the existing bargaining units, they shall be covered by the appropriate contract or agreement.

Teachers in the charter school are members of the Freshwater Teachers' Association for the purposes of collective bargaining under Government Code 3540-3549.3.

Retirement Benefits: Employees will participate in STRS, PERS or Social Security depending upon each individual's eligibility. The Freshwater School District will provide necessary administration of these programs.

Return Rights: Any Freshwater School District employee who is assigned to Freshwater Charter Middle School shall retain rights and seniority as any other employee in the Freshwater School District.

IX. Dispute Resolution Process, Oversight, Term and Renewal

The Freshwater Charter Middle School and the Freshwater School Board of Trustees will use the policies and processes for airing and resolving internal and external disputes contained in the Board Policy adopted by the Freshwater School District. Parents, students, board members, volunteers, and staff at the Charter School will be provided with a copy of the school's policies and dispute resolution process upon request.

The District and the Charter School agree to work together to accomplish all tasks necessary to fully implement this Charter, including the submission of any necessary and duly-prepared waiver requests to the State Board of Education.

The governing board of the Freshwater School District agrees to receive and review the annual fiscal and programmatic audit and performance report as specified in Element Number 9. Within two months of the receipt of this annual review, the board must notify the Charter Middle School Council as to whether it considers the Charter School to be making satisfactory progress relative to the student outcomes specified in Element Number 2 and other operational goals specified herein. This annual review will include the specific reasons for the board's conclusions. If, in its review of the school's annual report, the board determines that the school is making

satisfactory progress toward its goals, this Charter, and any mutually-agreeable amendments, are renewed for a term of five years.

If the governing board of the district believes it has cause to revoke this Charter, the board agrees to notify the Charter Middle School Council and Charter School staff, and grant the school reasonable time to respond to the notice and take appropriate corrective action prior to revoking the Charter. If corrective action fails to resolve the dispute, the Charter School and Freshwater District agree to submit the matter to a mutual agreeable third party for a non-binding recommendation on how to resolve the matter in accordance with the terms of this Charter.

The terms of this Charter can be severed. In the event that any of the provisions are determined to be unenforceable or invalid for any reason, the remainder of the Charter shall remain in effect, unless mutually agreed otherwise by the governing bodies of the District and Charter School. The District and Charter School agree to meet to discuss and resolve any issues or differences relating to invalidated provisions in a timely and proactive fashion.

X. Administration

Location of the Charter

The Freshwater Charter Middle School is located on the same campus as the Freshwater Elementary School. These two schools comprise Freshwater School District. The school district serves students in the Eureka/Arcata area. Busing is provided only to students who live within the physical boundaries of the school district.

Authority of Charter

The Charter includes only the 7th and 8th grades. The Charter document governs the educational program set out for the middle school students. If the Charter document is found to be in conflict with the California Education Code, Freshwater School District Board Policy, or laws of California, the law and policy will supercede the authority of the charter. The FCMS Council will then revise the Charter document appropriately and re-submit it to the Board of Trustees.

The Charter document must, under law, be re-approved by the Freshwater School District Board of Trustees who then submit it to the State Board of Education for final approval.

Audit of Financial Status and Program Operations

The Freshwater Charter Middle School conducts its financial operations through established procedures required of the Freshwater School District. The Freshwater Charter Middle School will present an annual balanced budget for Board approval. The Freshwater School District is responsible for (but not limited to) payroll, insurance, contracts, audits and other related fiscal matters. The Freshwater Charter Middle School has a portion of its budget (agreed upon by the Charter Council and the Freshwater School District) in a separate location of the Freshwater School District budget for the purpose of direct purchasing and program operations.

Allocations of any funding, grants, etc. from outside sources (public or private) intended for program operations, extended instructional time, special projects, pilot programs, including teacher incentives, etc., which can be supplemented to the contracted salary and/or compensation of the Charter School employees must be approved by the Freshwater Charter Middle School Council and the Freshwater School District Board of Trustees. Annual reports prepared by the FCMS faculty and FCMS Council will be made to the Board of Trustees.

Should FCMS close its doors, the following procedures will take place:

- All assets and liabilities of the school will be audited
- Materials and assets will be returned to the school district for its use, with the exception of texts specific to the grade levels in the middle school. These texts will be sold or disposed of according to education code.
- The closing financial statement will reflect the payment of any liabilities outstanding for the middle school.
- Student records will be sent to the school to which each student enrolls.
- Should the school be housed in rented modulars, the buildings will be returned to the State of California and any costs for breaking down the buildings and moving them incurred by the District will be paid from FCMS funds.