



Mission Statement

Forest Charter School is committed to nurturing the love of learning in all students through parental choice in education. By cultivating a staff of dedicated personnel, Forest Charter School pledges an ongoing and expansive environment of educational excellence. The cornerstone of our Personalized Learning Program is positive collaboration on the part of participating students, parents, and professional educators. The ultimate mission of Forest Charter School is to honor the student's individual learning style through parental options in the selection and implementation of effective curriculum to prepare him/her for success in the 21st Century.

A. Educational Program

Forest Charter School is designed to educate students in grades K through 12 who need or desire an alternative learning model to traditional education. Our estimated student population for the first school year is 300. Future growth of the student population will be limited to 700 students in order to maintain a more personal community school environment.

We believe learning best occurs when:

- ❖ Individual student's diverse learning styles, backgrounds, and needs are adapted to their situation.

- ❖ Students experience tasks which challenge them and require perseverance, fitness, craftsmanship, imagination, self-discipline, and achievement.
- ❖ Students are actively engaged in learning experiences which are integrated across curriculum areas and are meaningful within the context of their present and future life
- ❖ Students are engaged in real-life studies, exposed to experts, and work on authentic projects.
- ❖ Learning opportunities provide information to ponder, experiment, and time to assimilate.

By encouraging students' to pursue their interests, talents, and passions, Forest Charter School will enable students to become self-motivated, competent, and lifelong learners while pursuing academic competencies and requirements.

The key feature of our instructional approach is through a Personalized Learning Program where students are provided alternative educational approaches. Students learn in a variety of ways and are guided in assessing their individual learning styles. A Personalized Learning Program might include the following: alternative class settings, such as but not limited to, cooperative classes, a two-day a week college class model, on-line courses, tutoring, contract instruction with businesses and/or participating schools, home based instruction, the use of traditional and non-traditional texts and learning materials, thematic projects, and field studies. Eligible students may participate in community college courses, mentorships, job shadowing, and vocational training through existing community programs, such as the Regional Occupational Program.

The traditional school setting does not meet the needs of all students. There is a growing need within our community for children and parents seeking an alternative learning environment. This program appeals to a wide variety of students. Our goal in working individually and in small groups with students most particularly addresses the needs of students with learning differences. Students who fail to meet student outcomes may be referred by their Education Specialist or parent to a Student Solution Team (SST). At the SST meeting, parents, staff, professionals, and sometimes the student will strategize on how to utilize resources within the charter school program to improve student success. Students who participate in special education programs will have their special learning needs addressed in their Individual Education Plan (IEP). Other students whose learning issues are not addressed by the Special Education Programs may be addressed on an individual basis through general school resources.

B Measurable Pupil Outcomes

Forest Charter School empowers students to fulfill all their learning requirements through graduation in a manner consistent with the philosophy of the school.

At Forest Charter School parents, students, and education specialists only encourage promotion to the next level when the student can demonstrate a full understanding of the fundamental concepts of a subject. Students may demonstrate their growth towards student standards in a variety of ways. However the preferred measurement of learning is through completed assignments, projects, and tests. Application of critical thinking skills and creative presentation will be encouraged.

Students will demonstrate competency in six growth areas. The extent to which students achieve these growth areas is determined by achievement of the following student standards:

1. Students will demonstrate their ability to communicate effectively through reading, writing, listening, speaking, and presentation using multiple forms of expression (i.e.: written, oral, and multimedia). Communication skills will be appropriate to the setting and audience. Students will read and interpret information from a variety of sources to gain useful and applicable knowledge.

2. Students will demonstrate their ability to sufficiently understand and function in the world around them by a knowledge of the following:
 - ❖ their personal involvement in the community
 - ❖ their personal role as an employer/employee or college student
 - ❖ their personal role as a selective consumer
 - ❖ their personal role as a financial manager
 - ❖ the importance of personal physical health
 - ❖ their personal physical fitness
 - ❖ competent use of technology in the pursuits of life
3. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the history of mankind and governmental functions by:
 - ❖ identifying relationships between past and present events, situations, diverse peoples, governments, finances, and world politics.
 - ❖ drawing conclusions about the future using evidence from the past.
 - ❖ applying physical and cultural geography to his/her understanding of diverse societies.
 - ❖ identifying the founding principles, the structures, operations and relationships of the government in the United States of America.
4. Students will demonstrate their ability to calculate and solve problems with clarity and precision by applying mathematical principles and operations. Skill areas may include those within arithmetic, algebra, geometry, personal finance, and/or other mathematical subjects which the Education Specialist and parent(s) deem appropriate.
5. Students will demonstrate their knowledge of applying scientific concepts and skills to explain their world, by observing, comparing, ordering, categorizing, and communicating ideas.
6. Student will show their special interests, talents and abilities by demonstrations, projects, presentations, performances, and observation.

C Methods of Measuring Student Progress.

Assumptions about Assessment

Our choice of methods to assess pupil progress is based on the following four beliefs about assessment:

1. In order to have a complete picture of a student's growth different types of assessments must be used. Assessments should focus on a student's growth towards a proficiency standard rather than comparing a student's performance against other students.
2. There should be a close relationship between a desired student outcome and the means used to assess it.
3. Assessing what students do with knowledge is as important as assessing what knowledge they have.
4. Assessment should promote and support reflection and self-evaluation on the part of students, staff, and parents.

Assessment Methods

While all students will achieve the required standards by graduation, not all progress at the same rate. Evaluation of that progress is based on individual abilities, interests, and talents.

Based on the above beliefs, methods by which student progress is assessed will be through a variety of the following:

- ❖ Monthly review of work
- ❖ Annual portfolios (minimum of 2 samples per subject area per semester)
- ❖ Parent and Education Specialist observation
- ❖ The current state mandated assessment tool administered in Spring
- ❖ Student work samples
- ❖ Student grades
- ❖ Student demonstrations
- ❖ Field studies
- ❖ Participation in enrichment activities
- ❖ The California High School Exit Exam

Forest Charter School will administer the current state mandated assessment tool in Spring.

D. Governance Structure of School

Structure

The Forest Charter School shall be governed by a Charter Council consisting of nine voting members. The Charter Council will be comprised of five parents with enrolled children, two certificated staff members, one high school student enrolled in the school, one member of the community. A Quorum shall consist of five members provided that at least two parents and at least one staff member are present.

The initial Charter Council shall be appointed by the administration on the advice of the Charter Formation Group. Parent members shall be elected by the school parent population, with one vote per family. For purposes here-of, the term “parents” includes step-parents and legal guardians. Staff members shall be elected by all staff members with one vote per employee. The student member shall be elected by all high school students enrolled in the school with one vote per student. The community representative shall be appointed by the Charter Council and will serve a term of one year.

If a community representative is not found to fill the position within three months, a parent may be appointed by the Charter Council to serve the remainder of the term. If a parent is not available then a staff member may be appointed by the Charter Council to serve the remainder of the term

Governance council elections will be held in September of each year. Parent members shall serve for two years with the exception of two positions of the Formation Council who will only serve one year. Staff positions shall serve one year. The student member shall serve one year.

Council Responsibilities

The Charter Council is responsible for all recommended modifications to the school Charter. Any Charter Council recommendations to amend the school Charter must be approved by the Twin Ridges Elementary School District Board of Trustees prior to implementation.

The Charter Council will meet at least four times per fiscal year and more frequently for the first year. Announcements of all Charter Council meetings will be announced in Newsletters sent home to all families and will be posted in appropriate places to conform with the Brown Act.

The Forest Charter School will be annually evaluated by the Charter Council. The evaluations will be used to determine the effectiveness of the Charter School programs and provide direction for program improvements. The Charter Council will provide input and recommendations related to the fiscal relationship between Twin Ridges Elementary School District's overall revenues and expenditures, and the revenues and expenditures of Forest Charter School.

The Charter affirms that it intends to create By-laws. Membership and its definitions, succession, voting rights, termination of membership, resignations, and vacancies will be covered in detail in the by-laws. The procedure followed for conducting elections and soliciting candidates is also delineated in the by-laws.

In compliance with Federal and State laws and regulations governing special education services, services for eligible students will be provided through the Twin Ridges Elementary School District, the Local Education Agency of the Placer/Nevada Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). These services may include Search and Serve, Referrals for special education services, assessments and identification, IEP meetings, consulting, direct student service and administrative services. Forest Charter School is part of a cooperative of Charter Schools whose Coordinated Charter Council determines the specific relationship and services between each school and Twin Ridges Elementary School District. Specific details of this relationship will be agreed upon in an agreement with the District within the Memorandum of Understanding document.

Administrator's responsibilities

The Forest Charter School Administrator shall continue to assure:

- ❖ Evaluation of staff
- ❖ Review selection and assignment of staff with the Charter Council
- ❖ Development of the Charter budget which will be approved by the Charter Council and ratified by Twin Ridges Elementary School District Board of Trustees
- ❖ Development of the annual school calendar

E. Employee Qualifications

All education specialists must hold valid California Commission on Teacher Credentialing teaching certificate, permit, or other document equivalent to that which a teacher in other public schools would be required to hold. These documents shall be maintained on file at Twin Ridges Elementary School District and shall be subject to periodic inspection by Twin Ridges Elementary School District.

Qualifications for any other full-time, part-time or temporary employee shall be determined by the Charter Council and reviewed by Twin Ridges Elementary School District.

F. Health and Safety Procedures

To ensure the safety of students and staff, California Education Code (C.E.C), Section 44237, shall be followed in regard to salaried employees. Immunization and other health-related issues or employees and students of Forest Charter School will be addressed in accordance with existing board policy and applicable law. All certificated and administrative staff shall receive training in emergency response, including appropriate "first responder" training or its equivalent.

All employees of the school must submit to a criminal background check and furnish a criminal record summary as required by Education Code Section 44237. Safety reviews, employee record checks (i.e. C.E.C Section 44237) and program, transportation, and building use standards and practices shall be performed as needed and as is consistent with appropriate laws, Charter School Statutes, and Twin Ridges Elementary School District policy. An on-site designee shall oversee proper reporting procedures for and building/grounds safety issues, injuries, or other health/safety related problems.

All school facilities shall function as a drug, alcohol, and tobacco free workplace.

G. Means to Achieve Racial/Ethnic Balance Reflective of District

Students will be considered for admission without regard to ethnicity, national origin, gender, or disability. Forest Charter School will seek to maintain racial and ethnic balance among its pupils that is reflective of the general population within the territorial jurisdiction of Twin Ridges Elementary School District through the open enrollment policy of the Twin Ridges Elementary School District

H. Admission Requirements

Students shall be considered for admission without regard to ethnicity, national origin, gender, religious affiliation, income level, disability or achievement level. Admission according to place of residence of student's parents shall be determined by current legislative law regarding Independent Study Program charter schools. Forest Charter School seeks to admit children ensuring that the educational program provides the least restrictive environment.

For Forest Charter School to consider a child for enrollment, an Application for Enrollment and the Enrollment Questionnaire must be completed and submitted. Upon receipt of the completed Application for Enrollment and the Enrollment Questionnaire, and if an Educational Specialist is available, the application will be processed according to the Forest Charter School enrollment procedure. If there is not an opening upon receipt of the application and questionnaire, the child will be placed on the Forest Charter School's inquiry list.

Upon acceptance for admission, and each semester thereafter, all students and their parents are required to sign a student agreement. This contract delineates the roll of student, parent and Education Specialist in the education of the student. Non-compliance with this document can result in expulsion.

Students are considered for enrollment into Forest Charter School as follows:

- ❖ First - The students already enrolled in Forest Charter School.
- ❖ Second - Children of staff and teachers working at Forest Charter School.
- ❖ Third - Siblings of those already enrolled in Forest Charter School for 1 school year.
- ❖ Fourth - Applicants on the school's inquiry list not listed who reside in Nevada County.

- ❖ Fifth - All other applicants on the school's inquiry list not listed in the first four categories.

Applicants will be considered in order of receipt of application. When there are more applicants than openings, a lottery will be held and applicants will be considered based on their assigned number as a result of the lottery draw.

Students who have been expelled or have school records showing recurrent behavior/disciplinary problems will require special consideration by the class teachers and may not be accepted.

Open Enrollment

For Kindergarten, open enrollment period for siblings of those already enrolled in Forest Charter School for 1 year ends the last Friday in January.

Open enrollment period for kindergarten ends the last Friday in February for current school year.

Open enrollment for grades 1 - 12 ends the last Friday in February for current school year.

Lottery Process

Due to the divergent geographic area served by this charter school, a lottery may be held for a specific geographic area, not the whole school.

- ❖ Any public lottery for Forest Charter School will be held on or before the first and third Monday on the month following the determination that a lottery is necessary
- ❖ All names selected in the lottery draw are assigned a number and entered onto a waiting list in order of their selection. When the waiting list is exhausted, new applicants will be eligible for the next lottery draw.
- ❖ All drawings will be held at noon.
- ❖ Three people must be present at a lottery drawing.
- ❖ A log will be kept of all applicants in the drawing and their assigned number.

Preference for admission shall be given to siblings of currently enrolled students, as well as students residing within the Twin Ridges Elementary School District. Admission will be dependent upon parent and student signatures on Student Agreements signed and complied with each semester of enrollment.

The charter school shall comply with all existing laws establishing minimum and maximum age limits for attending public school.

I. Financial and Programmatic Audit

A qualified auditor, which shall employ generally accepted accounting practices applicable to the school, will perform an annual financial audit of Forest Charter School. The audit will be part of Twin Ridges Elementary

School District's audit. Such an audit shall at a minimum verify the accuracy of the school's financial statements, revenue-related data collection and reporting practices, and examine the school's internal controls.

It is anticipated that the annual audit shall be completed reasonably promptly after the close of the fiscal year. A copy of the auditor's findings shall be forwarded to the Twin Ridges Elementary School District. Procedures and/or processes that caused the exceptions and deficiencies shall be modified to meet the auditor's specifications by the Charter Council. Such modifications shall be sent to the Twin Ridges Elementary School District Board within three months of the auditor's report

In addition to a regular financial audit, Forest Charter School will produce and provide to Twin Ridges Elementary School District an annual performance audit. The Programmatic Audit will, at a minimum, include the following data:

1. Beginning year 2, a copy of the Charter Council's self-evaluation on prior year management performances, summary of major decisions and policies established during the year, and upcoming year's goals.
2. Data on the level of parent and staff involvement in the school's Charter Council (and other aspects of the school, if applicable) and summary data from an annual parent and staff survey.
3. Data regarding the number of staff working at the school and their qualifications.
4. An overview of the school's admissions practices during the year and data regarding the numbers of students enrolled, the number on waiting lists, and the number of students expelled and/or suspended.
5. Analysis of the effectiveness of the school's internal and external dispute mechanisms and data on the number and resolution of disputes and complaints.

J. Pupil Suspension and Expulsion

Forest Charter School will develop and maintain a comprehensive set of student discipline policies. These policies will be printed and distributed as part of the school's student handbook and will clearly describe the school's expectations regarding attendance, mutual respect, substance abuse, violence, safety, and work habits.

The school director may suspend students who fail to comply with these policies at any time. Students who habitually fail to comply with these policies and/or who present an immediate threat to health and safety may also be suspended and later expelled by the school's governing board upon recommendation of the director. Prior to expulsion, students will be accorded due process unless the student's conduct presents an immediate threat to the health or safety of others. The school will notify the district of any expulsions and will include suspension and expulsion data in its annual performance.

For students with an IEP, guidelines for suspension and expulsion will be followed as per the Placer/Nevada County SELPA plan.

K. Retirement System

All employees of Forest Charter School shall participate in the school sponsored retirement plans according to policies developed by the Charter Council in collaboration with Twin Ridges Elementary School District, and adopted as Forest Charter policies. These may include but are not limited to STRS and PERS.

L. Attendance Alternatives

Students residing within Twin Ridges Elementary School District who choose not to attend Forest Charter School may attend other Twin Ridges Elementary School District schools or pursue an inter-district transfer in accordance with existing enrollment and transfer policies of their district or county of residence.

M. Description of Employee Rights

Existing Twin Ridges Elementary School District employee agreements, contracts, or policies relating to school district or school district personnel may not cover Forest Charter School employees. Employees covered by existing Twin Ridges Elementary School District employee agreements that transfer to Forest Charter School staff, are no longer covered by Twin Ridges Elementary School District collective bargaining agreements. All first year Forest Charter School employees will work under probationary status and will undergo Forest Charter School's annual evaluation process. The parties involved may agree to a second year probationary status.

N. Dispute Resolution Process, Oversight, Reporting, and Renewal

Intent

The intent of this dispute resolution process is to: resolve disputes within the school pursuant to the school's policies, minimize the oversight burden on the district, ensure a fair and timely resolution to disputes, and frame a charter oversight and renewal process and timeline so as to avoid disputes regarding oversight and renewal matters.

Public Comments

The staff and Charter Council members of Forest Charter School and Twin Ridges Elementary School District agree to attempt to resolve all disputes regarding this charter pursuant to the terms of this section. Both shall refrain from public commentary regarding any disputes until the matter has progressed through the dispute resolution process.

Disputes Arising from within the School

Disputes arising from within the school, including all disputes among and between students, staff, parents, volunteers, advisors, partner organizations, and Charter Council members of the school, shall be resolved pursuant to policies and processes, The Uniform Complaint Procedure, developed by Twin Ridges Elementary School District.

The Twin Ridges Elementary School District shall not intervene in any such internal disputes without the consent of the Charter Council of the school and shall refer any complaints or reports regarding such disputes to the Charter Council and/or director of the school for resolution pursuant to the school's policies. The district agrees not to intervene or become involved in the dispute unless the dispute has given the district reasonable cause to believe that a violation of this charter or related laws or agreements has occurred, or unless the Charter Council of the school has requested the district to intervene in the dispute.

Disputes between the School and the Charter Granting Agency

In the event that the school or Twin Ridges Elementary School District have disputes regarding the terms of this charter or any other issue regarding the school and the district relationship, both parties agree to follow the process outlined below.

In the event of a dispute between the school and Twin Ridges Elementary School District, the staff and Charter Council of the school and district agree to first frame the issue in written format and refer the issue to the superintendent of the district and director of the school. In the event that Twin Ridges Elementary School District believes that the dispute relates to an issue that could lead to revocation of the charter, this shall be specifically noted in the written dispute statement.

The director and superintendent shall informally meet and confer in a timely fashion to attempt to resolve the dispute. In the event that this informal meeting fails to resolve the dispute, both parties shall identify two governing board members from their respective boards who shall jointly meet with the superintendent of the district and director of the school and attempt to resolve the dispute. If this joint meeting fails to resolve the dispute, the superintendent and director shall meet to jointly identify a neutral, third party arbitrator. The format of the arbitration session shall be developed jointly by the superintendent and director, and shall incorporate informal rules of evidence and procedure unless both parties agree otherwise. The findings or recommendations of the arbitrator shall be non-binding, unless the governing boards of the school and grantor jointly agree to bind themselves.

Oversight, Reporting, Revocation, and Renewal

If the Twin Ridges Elementary School District board believes it has cause to revoke this charter, the board agrees to notify the Charter Council of the School in writing, noting the specific reasons for which the charter may be revoked, and grant the school reasonable time to respond to the notice and take appropriate corrective action.

The Twin Ridges Elementary School District agrees to receive and review the annual fiscal and programmatic audit and annual performance report as specified above. Within two months of the receipt of this annual review, Twin Ridges Elementary School District must notify the Charter Council of the school as to whether it considers the school to be making satisfactory progress relative to the goals specified in this charter. This annual notification will include the specific reasons for Twin Ridges Elementary School District conclusions. If, in its review of the school's annual report, Twin Ridges Elementary School District determines that the school is making satisfactory progress toward its goals, this charter, and any mutually agreeable amendments, is renewed for a term of no less than five years.

O. Labor Relations

The Forest Charter School shall be deemed the exclusive public school employer of the employees of the charter school for the purposes of the Education Employment Relations Act.

