

INTRODUCTION

Manton Valley Charter

The Manton Valley Charter School project began in 2017 as a local response by engaged parents and educators to news that our school's services would be cut, perhaps even eliminated entirely, and our children bused out of the community. Together, we formed the Manton Education Council as a 501(c)(3) corporation to spearhead our efforts to keep education local, with an overall mission

“To kindle the flame of lifelong learning in children and uplift members of our rural Manton community by providing practical, hands-on educational tools and experiences.”

Before the consolidation of land and water rights by timber and power interests, many families homesteaded in Manton, and there were a number of small schools. These were consolidated into the Manton Joint Unified School District in 1920, with one school in the center of town serving the area's shrinking population. The school has been a community focal point for generations, drawing community members together with countless sporting tournaments, dances, and the Manton Apple Festival, which celebrated its 25th year in 2017. A lapsation process began in the 2013-14 school year, and the administration of MJUSD was transferred to Antelope School District. The Antelope School District board has voted to close the Manton School in the spring of 2018, citing budget overruns. They are now busing our middle school children to Red Bluff, a nearly hour-long ride each way.

For us at the Manton Education Council, this development presents an existential threat to our rural community. Without a school of our own, we wonder, how will we attract families with young children? What message do we send our kids if we add schooling to the already long list of things for which they're dependent on trips to town? How will we create community cohesion without a central shared space? And what will become of this set of buildings in the middle of our town if they are unoccupied? Manton, along with other rural towns in the eastern foothills, faces continued erosion of its economic sustainability and of its social and cultural continuity. If we cannot provide fertile ground for young people's lives to root in, we may continue to see our population and economic base dwindle until we are little more than a bedroom and retiree community for the valley towns.

As an alternative, we propose the Manton Valley Charter School, a free K-8 public school with these principles as its foundation:

1. Teacher powered / student driven

2. Union of practical skills and conceptual understanding
3. Land stewardship / preservation of rural values and lifeways

Teacher-powered organization means that teachers have maximum autonomy within state requirements to customize their curriculum to the needs and interests of the students, and that they share responsibility for school decision-making, for example by holding two of seven voting board seats. The curriculum will be student driven in ways where the teacher will encourage the children's interest in a topic, and engage their curiosity for learning.

Our focus on practical skills, land stewardship, and grounded understanding arises from the particular challenges faced by our rural town, as well as the resources at our disposal. Obstacles to creating a vital community in our area revolve around its scarce job prospects, which stem largely from the difficulties of adapting traditional homesteading know-how to the contemporary economy. And yet we have considerable resources to draw upon in teaching our students, including local knowledge expressed in Manton's agricultural enterprises, such as viticulture and wine-making, family farms operating Community Supported Agriculture businesses, beekeeping, and animal husbandry.

The skillsets and perspectives employed in these and other rural means of making a living are the hub of our vision of education, but the sort of student we intend to produce also integrates them with "three Rs" academic skills and, especially, with an understanding of how our rural place fits within the wider world. The Battle Creek watershed, for example, much of which is located in Manton, is an excellent vehicle for studying salmonid conservation and water usage issues, matters that link our position in California's hydrologic system with myriad economic, scientific, and policy questions, and which can be taught with different foci at varying grade levels.

This is one example of the ways we can combine hands-on and conceptual learning with an aim to connect the local and the broader world. In this sense, while our petition responds most directly to our children's educational needs in Manton, we recognize an opportunity here to offer land- and practice-based education to children from the communities neighboring the Manton Valley in both Tehama and Tehama counties.

In accordance with the California Charter Schools Act of 1992, as amended, ("Charter Schools Act") Manton Valley Charter School hereby submits this petition for its charter school.

The Charter Schools Act states:

It is the intent of the Legislature to provide opportunities for teachers, parents, pupils, and community members to establish and maintain schools that operate independently from the existing school district structure, as a method to accomplish all of the following:

- a) Improve pupil learning;
- b) Increase learning opportunities for all pupils, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for pupils who are identified as academically low achieving;

- c) Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
- d) Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity for the learning program at the school site;
- e) Provide parents and pupils with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system;
- f) Hold the schools established under this part accountable for meeting measurable pupil outcomes, and provide the schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems;
- g) Provide vigorous competition within the public school system to stimulate continual improvements in all public schools.

California Education Code Section 47601(a-g).

Further, Education Code section 47605(b) states: "In reviewing petitions for the establishment of charter schools pursuant to this section, the chartering authority shall be guided by the intent of the Legislature that charter schools are and should become an integral part of the California educational system and that establishment of charter schools should be encouraged."

Manton Valley Charter makes important contributions to the legislative goals outlined above. By granting this charter petition, the LEA School District will help fulfill the intent of the Charter Schools Act, while providing students in the area with a quality, hands-on educational option.

FOUNDING CHARTER LEADERSHIP

Catherine Mancino, Founding Teacher for Manton Valley Charter School

Catherine Mancino is a 'SoCal' transplant. Catherine, along with her husband and two boys moved to Manton in Tehama County in 2007. She holds a B. A. from San Diego State University as well as a Master's in Religious Education from Loyola University. She received her state of California multiple subject teaching credential from Chapman College. Catherine has 21 years teaching experience in grades K-8 in the California small schools system. She has taught at and sent her children to the small school in her community of Manton from 2008 until the present, teaching multiple subjects in a multi-grade class. Catherine is a firm believer in the power of small schools to find and build on the strengths of each unique child. She would like more than anything to see the small school system continue to exist and thrive in small rural communities.

Katherine Zablan, Founding Resource Specialist and Home School Teacher

Katherine brings a long history of education expertise and excellence to our group. She earned her BA at University of Hawaii, and her California Teaching Credential from CSU Sacramento. Katherine spent 4 years as a Waldorf School Administrator, and in 1997 returned to CSU Sacramento to earn a Resource Specialist credential in Special Education. Katherine worked for 10 years as a Resource Specialist, Art & Theater teacher and Department Chair overseeing 16 SPED teachers and 16 paraprofessionals at Armijo High School in Fairfield, California. After moving to the North State, Katherine developed and ran the Transitions Intervention Program

at Red Bluff High School. Katherine also has experience as a home school teacher for high school students. Over the past several years, Katherine has worked as the resource specialist for the Manton School. She is dedicated to doing whatever she can to facilitate a well-established charter school in Manton.

Marlo M. Eakes Meyer, M.A., Founding Interim Charter Administrator

Marlo has worked in the field of graduate education for the past 17 years for the University of Virginia. Marlo has worked from home in her current position as Education Administrator for the Department of Pediatrics for the past 8 years. She holds a Masters of Arts in Anthropology from California State University, Chico. Marlo is committed to local education and the preservation of rural communities. Marlo will work as the charter school interim administrator until the position is filled.

Matthew D. S. Meyer, PhD, Founding Charter Elective Coordinator (volunteer position)

Matthew was born in Northern California and grew up in Chico. He was a Rotary exchange student to Brazil after high school, and later did fieldwork in the Brazilian Amazon for his PhD in anthropology (U Virginia 2014). He has extensive experience teaching students of all ages, and has taught anthropology, Spanish, and Portuguese at the university level. Matthew enjoys taking walks with his dogs and working outside. Matthew will be leading the elective portion of the charter school.

Michelle Heino, Founding Charter Custodian/Cook/Van Driver

Michelle Heino, loves to work to spread the love of nature, agriculture, and youth she gained from roots in Tehama County farming. While moving about the world she has worked in various volunteer positions in schools from classroom to PTA, in churches youth education programs, with the Girl Scouts of America from troop to a regional council, in 4-H as a leader and county council officer, and on agriculture non-profits from the Mountain Growers Association (farmers market) and the North Valley Dairy Goat Association. She loves to jump in and help as needed- be it washing windows, serving on committees or writing bylaws and budgets, but most of all she likes working directly where she can see a love of learning ignite in people.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

In addition, Manton Valley Charter School will work with the following groups of professionals in filling out the school's leadership in the areas of curriculum, instruction, finance, business management, governance, and administration.

LEA School District

Partnership to be determined.

California State University, Chico Department of Agriculture

CSU Chico Department of Agriculture has agreed to a partnership with MVCS to send college interns to our campus to implement sustainable farm practices with our children. Projects

under consideration include, but are not limited to, a chicken coop, pig pen, organic garden, and composting.

California State University, Chico: Museum Studies Department

CSU, Chico Museum Studies Director, Georgia Fox, has been working with MVCS charter committee to create an opportunity for her graduate students to work in the Manton Museum. In the Fall of 2018, graduate students who are interested in Museum renovation, and historical data retention, will be working with MVCS to install a student historical learning center based in the original Manton School house which is now run as a museum.

Manton Music & Arts Program

The Manton Music & Arts Program, a 501(c)(3) organization, will be providing children music enrichment on a weekly basis, with performances for the community throughout the year. They offer instrument and voice lessons for all children in the greater Manton area, including the Shingletown ridge.

Makerspace

The Makerspace organization will work with the Manton Education Council to install a unique educational environment where students learn by doing. We will offer a wide variety of hands-on activities including computer coding, electronics, digital media, engineering, and other STEM-related projects, as well as an outdoor barn-style workshop where children will build with community craftsmen volunteers, who will lead weekly classes on design and woodworking.

Tehama County Solid Waste Management Agency

Manton Valley School will be partnering with the Tehama County Solid Waste Management Agency to help meet our goal of becoming a Green School of America and a model for other public schools. Until now, the school has had no recycling program, but together we will reduce our landfill-bound waste and create a composting system for cafeteria food scraps.

CHARTER ELEMENTS

The Charter Schools Act provides that a petition must contain reasonably comprehensive descriptions of the elements described in California Education Code Sections 47605(b)(5)(A-P). These sections of the law and the required descriptions are provided below.

ELEMENT 1: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Governing Law: A description of the educational program of the school, designed, among other things, to identify those whom the school is attempting to educate, what it means to be an “educated person” in the 21st century, and how learning best occurs. The goals identified in that program shall include the objective of enabling pupils to become self-motivated, competent, and lifelong learners.

1a. Students Served

Manton Valley Charter will offer free public education to students in Tehama and surrounding counties, to include Mendocino, Trinity, Shasta, Plumas, Butte, and Glenn. Because of our rural location in the Manton Valley, straddling the Tehama-Shasta line, we expect that the majority of our students will come from those two counties. We plan to open our doors to students in kindergarten through 8th grade in the fall of 2018, with plans to grow with our student body by offering a home-based independent study for high school-aged children with options to join in school electives, fieldtrips, and community service projects in the years to come. High school students will be invited to help younger students through our mentor-tutor program which will count toward volunteer hours for the high school community members.

The Manton Education Council has conducted an informal census of children in the Manton area. Our numbers indicated 85 children reside in the town of Manton. Below is a graph according to age or grade range. Many of these students are being homeschooled and are linked to schools outside the Manton area. By offering a homeschool component we will be able to offer these families education opportunities in their hometown.

The level of interest exceeded our expectation, with interested families in the town of Manton and from the neighboring area of Shingletown. We also plan outreach in the Payne's Creek / Highway 36 area to gauge interest in our program there. The school should be able to accommodate all students seeking enrollment during our first year of operation through innovative and flexible scheduling, including services for special needs families and homeschooling families. Our commitment to instructional flexibility and teacher-powered curriculum will allow us to differentiate instruction and design multi-grade level classes based upon the enrollment numbers for each grade level.

MANTON INFORMAL CENSUS	
AGE/GRADE RANGE	# of Children
0-4 YEARS	29
K-5 TH GRADE	25
6 TH – 8 TH GRADE	19
9 TH – 12 TH GRADE	12

At this time, Manton Valley Charter expects to have 25 students in K through 8th grade. Enrollment projections are based upon goals set by the Manton Education Council Board of

Directors and Manton Valley Charter School Committee and are subject to change depending on future conditions and accommodations. The table presented below represents the minimal number of students projected to be enrolled.

Grade Level	Number of Students 2018-2019	Projected Number of Students 2019-2020	Projected Number of Students 2020-2021
K	5	5	7
1	3	5	5
2	3	3	3
3	3	3	3
4	3	3	3
5	2	3	3
6	2	2	3
7	3	2	2
8	1	3	2
9		1	3
10			1
Total	25	30	35

Traditionally, families in the Manton Valley have been able to participate in a local economy where the Forward lumber mill and farming provided an adequate salary for families to grow. In the early 20th century, power and lumber companies moved into the town and bought up much of the land and water rights. Over the decades, due to wild fire damage, and loss of the mill, the population has shrunk somewhat, so that today many residents make the 30-40 minute drive to Red Bluff for employment opportunities.

The subsequent decline in jobs has had a devastating effect on our community. In its heyday, Manton Joint Unified School had 200 students in attendance. We hope eventually to see our charter school’s student body grow to what it was during the golden years. It is more important than ever for students in our area look to college as a means to insure successful employment with adequate living wages. To prepare them for future success, a primary goal of Manton Valley Charter is to inspire students to begin their journey toward a love of learning in kindergarten, and come to adopt a lifestyle of continued learning, as distinct from compartmentalized notions of what is school and what is not. Instilling love for learning through hands-on experiences will benefit the children as they move on to high school and college. Teaching them rural know-how along with academic rigor will enable our students to bridge the ever-widening gap between city and country life, and to see multiple sides of the challenges facing our region, state, and nation.

1b. How Learning Best Occurs

Students at Manton Valley Charter (MVCS) will receive instruction through a guided framework that addresses individualized needs and encompasses all learning styles. MVCS will provide a small school, low teacher-to-student-ratio setting that fosters close relationships between students and teachers. Teachers will be certificated/credentialed by the state of California to teach in their subject area(s), have classroom experience, and participate in ongoing professional development in order to stay abreast of the most current teaching methodologies and state standards. MVCS has two experienced teachers committed to working at the charter school (see Appendix H). The first teacher has over 20 years of teaching experience in a traditional classroom setting. Our second teacher has over 30 years of experience in non-traditional and traditional settings, is a credentialed special education teacher, and has extensive experience as a high school homeschool teacher. This teacher will lead our Special Education and homeschool programs.

MVCS will provide an environment that supports student understanding of the earth's cycles and rhythms and provides practical opportunities to apply that understanding in a farming community. Opportunities for community service and expanded learning through field trips will develop citizens who are equipped with 21st Century leadership skills, and who are prepared to contribute and make a difference in society.

Seven fundamental characteristics guide and contribute to our mission and define our educational program:

A. Multiple Intelligences

Our program will use a hands-on/project-based learning approach. However, we are dedicated to serving students/children of all intelligences: linguistic, logical, visual, musical, intra-personal, kinesthetic, inter-personal, and naturalistic. Our 'learning by doing' model enables students to glean from one another's strengths in order to find the best solutions to problems presented to them through teamwork and collaboration.

B. Kind, Caring Environment

MVCS is a small charter school servicing the small community of Manton and the surrounding area. With our low teacher-to-student ratio, our school provides an atmosphere more akin to family rather than a business or institution. Therefore, no one is left behind or made to feel lesser. All ideas are welcome, valued and listened to when working on any project. This encourages and enables all students to have an equal voice and make a contribution to the group. Teachers teach and model cooperation, kindness, and negotiation where everyone's opinion is valid and acceptable.

C. Project Based and Collaborative

Children work best in a collaborative environment. Therefore, MVCS offers students hands-on projects to be worked on and solved through interacting with one another. All students are involved in every aspect of the project, working together with teachers, who take the role of facilitators throughout the process. This model more closely mimics the way in which the majority of people work in the real-world environment, thereby preparing students to be successful contributors in the workplace.

D. Sustainability

MVCS is located in the fertile Battle Creek watershed northeast of Red Bluff, an area of significant ecological importance and home to small homesteads and agricultural enterprises. To take advantage of this, we have centered our curriculum on sustainable production of local artisanal products and foods, including fruits and vegetables as well as eggs, dairy and meat products. Students will be taught the importance and principles of responsible land use, water management, and animal husbandry.

E. Local

Extended families of MVCS students as well as local community members are all welcome and encouraged to participate in the program at MVCS. These members of our school/community offer valuable experiences that enrich the MVCS curriculum and enhance the spectrum of learning opportunities for all of our students.

F. Global

Our commitment is that each MVCS student will leave our school prepared to make a positive contribution in the world by fully participating as citizens in our global society. To help prepare them, we incorporate leadership skill training in our curriculum and require community service in order to graduate. Fostering engagement with the wider world is a crucial part of producing citizens who can both appreciate rural culture and navigate urban and institutional spaces.

G. Flexible

To accommodate a variety of lifestyles in our community, MVCS offers both homeschool and an independent study tracks, in addition to our on-campus program. All enrolled students will be offered the extracurricular options available regardless of the program they enroll in as best fits their schedules and interests.

Students at MVCS will receive instruction through a teacher-powered/student-driven curriculum that addresses individual needs and a variety of learning styles. Students will have access to multi-age, skill-based instruction. Small group instruction and peer tutoring are key elements of this model. Homeschool curriculum will be provided for students who thrive best in this model. Students with special needs will be served according to the ability of the school to

meet the needs of each student's IEP, and county support for services will be sought on an as-needed basis, with the use of video link/VOIP consultations where appropriate. Teachers and parents will develop collaboratively curriculum that meets state standards, as well as enrichment that goes beyond the standards, for independent study and classroom programs.

Manton Valley School will provide 175 days of instruction, per California Code of Regulations, Title 5, 11960. This complies with the following annual state-mandated minutes for K-8 education:

K:	36,000 minutes
1-3:	50,400 minutes
4-8:	54,000 minutes

MVCS will be independent study based, with classroom learning available, but much of the time will be spent in the larger classroom of the world – outdoors. The school provides at least the minimum instructional minutes (EC 47612.5) over the course of the required number of school days (EC 47602). Due to the initially small enrollment anticipated at MVCS, and to our focus on teaching for understanding, students will attend multi-age classes in math and language that are appropriate to their abilities. While we will use the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) as a general guide, teachers will frequently augment these in order to follow the passions of their students and to encourage curiosity and initiative.

Enrollment Options

MVCS will offer classroom and enrichment experiences in three modalities to be selected by families at enrollment:

Option 1: Option 1 is for families who wish their children to have a more traditional scholastic experience. This option offers a five (5) day-a-week Common Core curriculum schedule operating Monday through Thursday from 8AM to 12PM, with electives offered on Monday & Wednesday from 1PM to 3PM. On Fridays NGSS core curriculum will run from 8AM to 12PM, with field experience & hands-on activities from 1PM to 3PM. Elective classes, taught by community members and teachers, will offer hands-on activities such as carpentry, gardening, music, baseball, track and field, basketball, hiking, farming, propagation science, and soil science, to name a few.

Option 2: Option 2 is for families who wish to homeschool their children, but want to provide a hybrid experience by attending classroom instruction and enrichment classes part-time. It consists of a three (3) day-a-week schedule, with core curriculum Wednesday through Friday 8AM to 12PM, and electives offered on Wednesday from 1PM to 3PM. Fridays feature NGSS core curriculum, with field experience and hands-on activities from 1PM to 3PM. Families choosing option 2 will work with our homeschool teacher to design curriculum, and must meet every 20 days to assess progress. This option allows for students to join in fieldtrips, as well as

elective classes, taught by community members, that will offer hands-on activities, including gardening, music, baseball, track and field, basketball, hiking, farming, propagation science, soil science, to name a few.

Option 3: Option 3 is for families who wish to conduct most of the child's learning from home. These families will work with our homeschool liaison to design their curriculum, and must meet every 20 days with the homeschool coordinator to assess progress. This option allows for students to join in fieldtrips, as well as elective classes. Elective classes, taught by community members and teachers, will offer hands-on activities such as, carpentry, gardening, music, baseball, track and field, basketball, hiking, farming, propagation science, soil science, to name a few.

Before and Aftercare

MVCS offers free before school care from 7 AM to 8 AM daily. All children will walk our nature trail, accompanied by a teacher or staff member, which will help prepare the children's bodies and minds to settle down to academics. The walk will commence at 7:30AM and last until about 8:00AM. In inclement weather, all students will gather in the gym for morning movement. There is no need to sign up for this program, parents can drop off their child(ren) and we will have staff on campus to supervise them.

We plan to submit an application for SERRF After school care program, which will run until 6 PM daily. Should we not receive SERRF After school care program, we will seek a grant to fund an aftercare program at low or no cost to our families.

To provide maximum flexibility of educational choice, MVCS is committed to utilizing all forms of curriculum available that meet California Content Standards. OdysseyWare is an example of online virtual education program provides core curriculum that is aligned to California State Standards for grades 3-8, as is IReady, which has both online and text materials. The classroom teacher and homeschool teacher will have the ability to assign and evaluate appropriate lessons for each individual student. These lessons range from stand-alone modules to multiple courses that the student can complete as part of their individually designed curriculum. Students learn the technological skills of research, software usage, and computer knowledge while receiving their appropriate level of California Standards-based curriculum.

Students have access to multi-aged, skill-based, small group instruction primarily in onsite courses. Peer tutoring, small group instruction, and guided instruction are strategies that may be used to best utilize the range of age, grade, and ability of the MVCS student body.

MVCS will continue to refine its academic program, based on effective teaching practices, recent research, and the best curriculum available. MVCS will continue to investigate and utilize the latest and most appropriate technology to meet the educational needs of its students.