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Parent Information: Frequently Asked Questions

What is a charter school?

Charter schools are innovative public schools that are accountable for student results. They are designed to deliver programs tailored to educational excellence and the needs of the communities they serve. They provide a choice for families to pick the school most suitable for their child's needs. They provide teachers more freedom from the bureaucracy of a large school to allow focus on their students reaching high academic standards. Charter schools are accountable to local and state educational authorities for meeting the goals stated in the charter contract.

What is special about Mark West Charter School?

The Mark West Charter School (MWCS) program has been designed to meet the needs of students whose families value high academic standards and foster their development into lifelong learners who are prepared to function as well educated and responsible people in the 21st century. The environment is academically demanding while remaining psychologically and physically safe, allowing the student to stay focused on the learning experience. A community connection is encouraged through family involvement in the support of academic goals and community service requirements. A traditional classroom based program is offered for grades 7 & 8 and an independent home study program for grades K through 8, which includes activities on campus.

Where is it?

MWCS is in the Mark West School District and is currently located at the south end of the San Miguel Campus at 5350 Faight Road in Santa Rosa.

Is it a "real" middle school?

Absolutely! The traditional 7th and 8th grade program at MWCS is organized (as are many middle schools and high schools) around a block structure with students moving to different rooms with different teachers for each block. Every student takes 2 academic blocks and 2 electives each day. One academic block is Math and Science and the other is Language Arts and Social Studies. Students have many choices for their elective classes including: Spanish, Technology, Art, Strings, Guitar, Journalism, Drama, Game Strategies, Videography, and PE. The school shares a campus with San Miguel Elementary School, and resides in buildings and classrooms dedicated to the charter school. MWCS honors all California State Educational Codes and local educational policies and regulations.

Is there tuition?

No, it is tuition free. MWCS is a public school, run as a non-profit organization, with its own budget and board of directors. It is directly funded by the State of California based on attendance.

Is there a sports program?

Yes, MWCS has both boys and girls intermural basketball teams and a PE program with intramural sports.

How does the MWCS middle school program compare academically to other middle schools in the area?

Based on 2008 STAR test results, MWCS was the only local middle school (of about 20 traditional public and charter schools from Healdsburg to Rohnert Park) to educate every student in Algebra 1 in 8th grade. MWCS ranked in the top 5 of these schools based on academic performance and only one school in the top 5 was a traditional public school, all others were charter schools. 96% of MWCS 7th graders scored proficient or advanced on their writing test in 2008.

Will a small school like MWCS adequately prepare my student for a large high school?

Yes! We have kept in touch with former students every year to see how they are doing in high school. Many of our formers students are in the top of their class in high school, successfully taking honors and AP classes. Students from Mark West Charter attend nearly every public high school in Santa Rosa as well as private high schools. Anthony, a former student, says, “The most important and influential trait I attribute to Mark West Charter School is teaching me effective work habits and strong work ethic. This allows me to carry a full academic load with honors classes, play varsity sports and be involved in school and community drama productions, while continuing to maintain a high GPA. Completion of Algebra 1 in middle school has really given me an academic advantage at the high school level. At MWCS I was taught how to deal with multiple projects and different levels of work, which in turn taught me how to execute my tasks with efficiency and organization.”

Why should I send my student to Mark West Charter School?

Every parent has a different reason for sending their student to Mark West Charter. It is a choice and is not the right choice for every student. Some reasons parents choose Mark West Charter are:

- High academic standards for all students including Algebra 1 for every 8th grader
- Small campus allows students to know every student and teacher; teachers know each student well enabling them to provide individualized attention
- Strong emphasis on a positive and respectful campus culture
- All students are encouraged to take leadership and learn “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens”
- Ability to take multiple electives every quarter
- An emphasis on community service and project based learning
- A school environment that encourages and welcomes parent involvement

It’s not too early to start thinking about middle school. Please contact us with questions, to attend an information night, to schedule a tour, or to have your student spend a day on campus shadowing a current student. Brochures are available in your elementary school office. Our website has additional information as well. Thank you for considering MWCS for your teen’s middle school experience; it is truly a superior choice.

Mark West Charter School

524-2741

www.mwcharter.org