

## **Summit Charter School FAQ's**

### **What is a charter school?**

A charter school is a public school that is funded by tax dollars and operates independently from the local county schools. Charter schools are non-sectarian, non-discriminatory, and non-selective in their admissions practices, and they must comply with the testing requirements established by the North Carolina State Board of Education. Therefore, any student from NC can apply to get into any NC charter school, and all students must take the state required end of year tests. Charter schools are encouraged to use innovative teaching methods to improve learning experiences for all students. Since charter schools are public schools, they are tuition free, with funding coming directly from federal, state, and local taxes.

### **Who can attend a charter school?**

Any North Carolina resident can attend if there is space available; if there are more students interested than the school can accommodate, a registration lottery determines admissions. Students may attend any school regardless of their county residence. For example, a Macon County resident can attend a charter school in Jackson County.

### **How is a charter school different from my neighborhood public school?**

Charter schools are public schools and must follow specific federal and state laws. As a charter school, we receive funding from the state for each student who attends our school. Each charter school is managed by an independent Board of Trustees that has the freedom to create its educational program from the ground up.

Every charter school is held accountable by the NC State Board of Education for end of the year test scores. In addition to end of the year test results, each charter school submits its academic and operational goals as part of its charter school application. Schools are required to meet these goals continually in order to maintain their charter with the state.

Because charter schools are not governed by the local school board, they have the freedom to hire teachers as needed and are not required to follow the state salary scale. Therefore, charter school teachers can be paid appropriately based upon professional accomplishments, responsibilities and performance.

Charter schools also have the freedom to develop their own curriculum and follow the course of study they believe will best prepare their students for the future. For example, at Summit Charter School we believe that all of our students should graduate high school fluent in both Spanish and English, so we will begin teaching Spanish in Kindergarten and will begin offering more intensive Spanish courses in Middle School. We have also added graduation requirements to meet the college entrance requirements of the most competitive universities in the country.

### **At what age can my child start school?**

If the child reaches the age of five years on or before August 31st of the year he/she is presented for enrollment, the child is eligible to enroll. If his fifth birth date falls on or after September 1st, the child is not eligible to enroll.

**Are students at charter schools required to take state mandated tests?**

Yes, our students are required to take all standardized tests as mandated by the state of North Carolina. NC End of Grade (EOG) testing begins in 3rd grade and is taken annually through 8th grade. Students in grades 9 through 12 take NC End of Course (EOC) tests at the end of specific core courses.

**Are charter school teachers certified?**

Yes, the state requires 50% of charter school teachers to be certified. Because not all teachers are required to have certification, charter schools have the option to hire teachers who are experts in their subject matter and then train them to teach students. In doing this, charter schools have the opportunity to attract teachers who are passionate about their field of study and who will share that enthusiasm and knowledge with their students. For example, a charter school could hire an accountant to teach a high school accounting class.

**How are charter schools held accountable for educating their students?**

Charter schools are not only held accountable to the state but also to the parents and students they serve. While we value the accountability that end of year state mandated exams provide, we believe that test scores only show a part of the picture when it comes to educating our students. As an educational choice, the school is also held accountable to the parents and students that attend, as they are not required to stay if they are dissatisfied with the education their child is receiving.

**Where can I find more information about charter schools?**

The NC Office of Charter Schools website provides additional information about charter schools in North Carolina. [Include link here?](#)

**How does Summit Charter School receive its funding?**

Charter schools receive funds from the state and county for operating expenses. These funds vary from county to county and follow the student. In the case of a student who requires Exceptional Children's programming, the school receives additional federal funds to help offset costs of therapies and/or pull-out services that the student requires. Unlike regular public schools, charter schools do not receive any capital/building funds, so schools must do their own fundraising to cover those costs.

**What grades are available at Summit Charter School?**

Summit Charter School is currently operating as a K-8 school. Beginning with the 2018-19 academic year, we will add a grade every year until we are a full K-12 school for the 2021-22 school year. We will have a maximum of 28 students per class in Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade and a maximum of 28 students per class in grades 6-8. All of our Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes have a teacher and an aid in the classroom. All of our core (math, science, history, Language Arts and Spanish) Middle School classes are split, with no more than 14 students per section.

**How do I enroll my child at Summit Charter School?**

We are currently accepting applications for the 2017-2018 school year. [www.summitschool.org](http://www.summitschool.org)

**Does Summit Charter School offer special education services?**

Yes, as a public charter school we are required to follow all federal laws including providing special education services and services for English as a Second Language students. Summit Charter School follows all Individualized Education Plans (IEP's) for any Exceptional Children's (EC) student. When EC students transfer to Summit, their IEP and education files transfer with them. Every IEP is reviewed on an annual basis. Summit Charter School has an academic and behavioral intervention process in place in order to identify any additional students who might qualify for special education services. Our EC staff is fully certified to teach all of our EC students.

**Will you offer transportation at the school?**

Because of our limited funding, we are unable to offer bussing at this time. Parents will be asked to drive their child to and from school. We expect many families will form carpool co-ops in their surrounding neighborhoods and that some families will coordinate with before- and after-school care facilities for transportation.

**Do you offer sports in the Middle School?**

The Board of Trustees is passionate about the athletics program at Summit Charter School and intends to work towards offering a full athletics program at the school. We believe much can be gained from participating in team sports and playing for your school. For both girls and boys, we currently offer cross country and soccer in the fall, basketball in the winter, and golf, tennis and track and field in the spring.

**What extracurricular activities do you currently offer?**

We currently offer Lego Robotics, Student Council, middle school athletics for boys and girls and Girls on the Run?. We will continue to add extracurricular opportunities as they become available or if there is sufficient interest in creating an offering.

**High School – FAQ**

**What type of daily class schedule will we offer?**

Summit Charter School will operate initially on a traditional 7 period schedule with 50-55-minute class periods. Currently our Middle School also operates on a 7 period daily schedule, and having complementary schedules will allow the Middle and High School to share teachers and classroom resources more efficiently and cost effectively.

**What grade levels will be offered in the High School?**

- 9<sup>th</sup> grade will be added in 2018-19
- 10<sup>th</sup> grade will be added in 2019-20

- 11<sup>th</sup> grade will be added in 2020-21
- 12<sup>th</sup> grade will be added in 2021-22

### **What assessments will be required?**

Students will participate in:

- Adaptive benchmark testing three times per year
- Standardized monthly assessments aligned to grade level standards
- All state required assessments

### **How many credits will be required to graduate?**

In order to graduate with a NC high school diploma, students at Summit Charter School will be required to earn a minimum of 22 credits.

### **Will the High School offer after-school clubs?**

Yes, the High School will offer clubs based on student interest and available facilities/staffing. The current Middle School students, parents and faculty will be surveyed to determine the clubs and extra-curricular activities of greatest interest to our school family.

### **What High School athletics will be offered?**

The following sports may be offered and developed based on student numbers/interest and available facility/staffing.

**Cross country** (immediately for 9<sup>th</sup> graders)

**Soccer** – During the first year of High School the 9<sup>th</sup> grade boys will play with the 8<sup>th</sup> grade boys to comprise a JV team that will compete in a full schedule in the fall; the girls will follow the same procedure in the spring.

**Volleyball** – Girls volleyball in the fall will be available as soon as the new gymnasium is completed

**Basketball** – The first year of High School we will play a JV basketball schedule with a combination of our 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders for both our girls and boys basketball teams.

**Golf** – (immediately for 9<sup>th</sup> graders)

**Tennis** – (immediately for 9<sup>th</sup> graders)

**Track and Field** – (immediately for 9<sup>th</sup> graders)

### **In what conference will our High School athletics participate?**

After discussions with Que Tucker of the North Carolina Athletic Association, we will wait to join the state athletic association until the year 2019-20. Not being a member of the association the

first year of our High School will allow Summit to combine the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders for the team sports and play a JV schedule in all major sports, and will ensure we have enough numbers so our 9<sup>th</sup> graders will not have a gap year of athletics.

When we do join the conference, we will have a probation time of two years before we are eligible for conference championships, but we will still be able to play a full conference schedule. The current members of the Smoky Mountain Conference are:

Andrews  
Blue Ridge  
Cherokee  
Hayesville  
Highlands  
Hiwassee Dam  
Murphy  
Nantahala  
Robbinsville  
Rosman  
Swain County  
Tri-County Early College