



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

2019 Application District Conversion Public Charter School

Deadline for Receipt of Submission: Thursday, August 1, 2019, 4:00 p.m.

Applications will not be accepted after this time.



Name of Proposed Charter School:

Mountainburg Middle School Brain Academy

Any application that is substantially incomplete will not be forwarded to the authorizer for consideration. An application will be considered substantially incomplete if it does not provide enough information to enable staff at the Arkansas Department of Education to provide a meaningful review.

Arkansas Department of Education
Charter School Office
Four Capitol Mall
Little Rock, AR 72201
501.683.5313

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
2019 APPLICATION
DISTRICT CONVERSION PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL**

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of Proposed Charter School: Mountainburg Middle School Brain Academy
 Grade Level(s) for the School: 5-8 Student Enrollment Cap: 400

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Grades to be Offered at the Charter	5-8	5-8	5-8	5-8	5-8
Enrollment Cap at the Charter	400	400	400	400	400

Name of School District: Mountainburg Middle School Brain Academy

Name of Primary Point of Contact: Dr. Debbie Atwell
 Address: 129 Hwy 71 SW City: Mountainburg
 ZIP: 72946 Daytime Phone Number: (479) 369-2121
 Email: debbie.atwell@mountainburg.org

Charter Site Address: www.mountainburg.org
 City: Mountainburg ZIP: 72946
 Date of Proposed Opening: 8/13/2020

Name of Superintendent: Dr. Debbie Atwell
 Address: 129 Hwy 71 SW City: Mountainburg
 ZIP: 72946 Daytime Phone Number: (479) 369-2121

B. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Provide the mission statement of the proposed school.

Applicant Response:

The mission of Mountainburg Middle School Brain Academy is to ensure high levels of learning for all in an environment that promotes wellness and brain development and allows students to investigate their potential in areas such as STEM research.

Explain how the mission statement was developed.

Applicant Response:

In 2018-2019 Mountainburg Public Schools underwent a leadership change, hiring Dr. Debbie Atwell as superintendent. In the process of assessing current reality, determining district and school needs, and strengths, as well as gathering input and the aspirations of stakeholders including teachers, students, parents, and board members, through surveys, reflections, and conversations, the mission and vision of the district emerged.

Our mission is simple we exist as a learning organization to ensure all learn at high levels. Our vision, what we aspire to become, is a learning organization that honors our history through values and traditions, builds our present through collaboration and team work, and creates our future through creativity and innovation. We are Dragon Strong.

Each school in the district plays a vital role in student success, with the mission of Mountainburg Elementary to ensure a Strong Start in foundational literacy, math, and citizenship skills. The mission of Mountainburg High School is to ensure that our students Finish Strong, college, career and life ready. The mission of Mountainburg Middle School is to ensure that students Stay Strong, continuing growth in academic skills and building strength of body and heart at a critical time of adolescent development.

Briefly describe the key programmatic features that the school will implement in order to accomplish the mission.

Applicant Response:

In order to accomplish the mission of ensuring high levels of learning for all, we plan to implement three different programmatic features into the schedule of the Brain Academy:

First, we want to address student academic growth with a focus on literacy and science. Our academic growth programs will center around STEM and the science of reading. STEM lessons, projects, and activities will be incorporated into both math and science classrooms. The science of reading strategies and methods will be taught in English and social studies classrooms with specific attention to phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension.

Second, we want to address student physical growth mindset through the incorporation of extended brain breaks. This scheduled time will allow students to work on their personal physical fitness between core content classes. Through active game time, challenge courses, and personal growth plans for each activity, we hope to use physical fitness concepts to inspire growth mindsets and confidence in students who might not see success in other areas of the school.

Third, we want to address student emotional and social skills through the implementation of a Focus 3 culture. We believe the implementation of a Focus 3 culture is vital to adjusting cultural behaviors like apathy and negativity. Focus 3 will be integrated using a very systematic approach; addressing the leadership, teachers, and students.

Describe how the parents or guardians of the enrolled students and other members of the community will be involved with the school to positively impact the charter school's educational programs.

Applicant Response:

Parents and community members will always be a part of the Mountainburg Public School. One way in which we encourage the community to be involved is through our Superintendent's monthly "Dragon Family Council" meeting. During this time, parents, community members, staff, students, and other stakeholders are invited to come together in order to share ideas about the school. We believe the positive culture of our school has a lot to do with the fact that the school is the heart of the Mountainburg community. We are all on a journey together, and the community know this. Keeping everyone involved, informed, and committed to the mission is key to improving student achievement. We have a continually growing group of people who attend, and have developed a safe place for open dialogue on any topic. Parents and community members ideas, concerns, and support are vital to Mountainburg's culture and overall success. The Brain Academy and the ideas surrounding it would be discussed in this meeting; in fact, the Brain Academy as already been discussed in the meeting and meetings like it.

C. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED CHARTER SCHOOL

The applicant for the proposed charter school, if approved by the authorizer, agrees to operate the educational program described below in accordance with the provisions described within this document, Arkansas Code Annotated §6-23-101 et seq., the State Board of Education Rules Governing Public Charter Schools, and the attached assurances.

Provide a narrative description of the various components of the proposed charter school by responding to the following prompts:

1. Describe the results of the public hearing, which was held for the purpose of assessing support for the establishment of this public charter school. Provide copies of supporting evidence.

Applicant Response:

In March 2019 Dr. Atwell discussed with the board the charter application process and the submission of the letter of intent to apply . Following the board meeting a communication was sent to district faculty and staff informing of the letter of intent. A faculty meeting was held with the Middle School faculty to answer questions about charter schools, and to gather input on ideas for innovations and to discuss possible waivers. In April the charter application was discussed at the Dragon Family and Community Council (see signatures of support), and with the Mountainburg City Council (see signatures of support). On July 25, 2019 the district held a public hearing, with approximately 16 in attendance. Prior to the hearing all faculty and staff were notified by email, community were notified by FaceBook, and an add was placed in the county newspaper three weeks prior to the hearing. Information was presented on the types of charter schools, the application process, the ideas for innovative practices, and waivers to be requested. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions, with questions being addressed. Questions of primary concern were of whether or not admission to the conversion charter were selective, and if the status of charter changed attendance and enrollment criteria. Questions were addressed and the response from the participants was positive, with all in favor of the district pursuing the charter status.

Attach documentation to demonstrate that each of the following requirements of Arkansas Code Annotated §6-23-201 was met:

- A. The notice of public hearing was distributed to the community, certified school personnel, and parents of all students enrolled at the public school for which the school district initiated the application.
- B. The notice of the public hearing was published in a newspaper having general circulation in the school district in which the school will be located **at least three weeks prior to the date of the meeting.**

2. Describe the educational need for the school by responding to the following prompts.

Explain the educational need for the charter in the district and/or geographical area to be served by the charter. Be certain to include quantitative data related to academic achievement and the source(s) for information presented.

Applicant Response:

Mountainburg Middle School received a “C” in the Public School Rating System with a 69.24% ESSA score which was below the state average of 69.97% in 2018. The Weighted Achievement Score was 59.52%. The Value-Added Growth Score was 81.31%. And the School Quality and Student Success Score was 51.69%.

MMS is comprised of 5.7% Native American, 2.5% Hispanic/Latino, and 91.8% White. A number of middle school students, 73%, qualify for free/reduced lunch. The percentage of students eligible to receive special education services is 16. Seven out of ten students are considered “Ready” in English, yet six out of ten students are “In Need of Support” in Reading. Six out of ten students are also “In Need of Support” in Science and Math.

MMS shares teachers from both the high school and elementary campuses in order to provide learners with classes such as physical education and fine arts due to constraints in scheduling with the other campuses. Mountainburg Elementary has a strong focus on preparing students with the foundational needs for advancement. Mountainburg High School has a strong focus on college and career readiness.

The data shows that a majority of our students are reading below grade level and are therefore not reading to learn, they are learning to read. The charter for Mountainburg Middle School would allow us to increase the current instructional time in reading instruction. These reading blocks would allow us to focus on the foundations of reading.

Another need we have is the ability to allow any teacher to supervise and coach students in physical activities and movement and to provide time for students to be able to exercise their bodies and minds. Brain Breaks will be incorporated after each content course, but this would need to take the place of a physical education class.

Finally, there is a need to support students’ social and emotional needs. Our students are in an impoverished area and many of their emotional needs are not met at home. In order to prepare students to become productive members of society and to foster growth, we need to build in the time to support the social and emotional needs.

Explain the educational need for the charter in light of the academic performance by the district, the campus proposed to be converted, and at the schools in the same feeder pattern as the proposed charter. Explain other significant factors. Be certain to include the source for information presented.

Applicant Response:

Currently we are a low achieving district with three schools rated low C's on school report cards. Graduation rates are 83%. Achievement scores are below state average, with only 69% of students meeting standards in ELA, 36.5% in reading, 29.7% in writing, 12.8% in STEM, 38.1% in math, and 34.8% in science according to district data provided by the StudentGPS Academic Dashboard, (March, 2019). 74% of our students are below the poverty income levels. These numbers tell our recent history of academic achievement, where we have been, **but they do not define us**. We refuse to place blame on the students, the families, the state testing, the faculty and staff, the ADE, etc. The faculty and staff of Mountainburg Public Schools love their students, and are committed to finding solutions to address our current gaps in learning. We understand college and career readiness is an imperative, and that the stakes are too high for a high school dropout. We also recognize that many of our students come from home and life experiences that do not support academic and behavioral success. All these factors mean that we do have to work harder to create successful graduates. We are not simply writing a school improvement plan. We are on our journey to elite. The intended outcomes in this quest are to build systems for teaching and learning, both adult and student, that ensure success through a focus on learning, a culture of collaboration, and a focus on results.

Mountainburg has many organizational assets conducive to professional learning community work, including **dedicated leadership, job-embedded professional development**, and **organizational structures** to support this work, and are in year one of our journey of becoming a professional learning community. We began 2018-2019 under new superintendent leadership, the perfect time to examine our mission, vision, values, and goals, and establish our core foundations. Work began spring of 2018 by establishing a school calendar designed to provide and utilize quality professional development. We have invested our available resources to enable team members to attend a PLC Overview with Jack Balderman, the PLC Institute held at Rogers in July of 2018, an RTI Institute with Jack Balderman, team visits to neighboring PLC schools, and held district professional development using digital Solution Tree resources, and consultant Tim Brown. We formed grade level and content learning teams with time to meet together weekly, and behavioral intervention teams that meet weekly to review student performance data.

We are unique in many ways. We are a small, rural community school that loves its community traditions like football, the fall festival with bingo and pie in the cafeteria, and snow days. We love our aged WPA era buildings of native stone, and our dinosaur park. We know to be a small school means we have limited resources. We survived the tornado of April 2018, just as we will survive and overcome our current challenges. We are **Dragon Strong**.

Overview of School Demographic

Mountainburg School District consists of three small schools: Mountainburg Elementary School, Mountainburg Middle School, and Mountainburg High School. Each school enrolls approximately 210 students for an average district enrollment of 630. We are the home of the Dragons, wearing blue and white with pride.

Mountainburg Elementary School is located on 2015 Lake Fort Smith Drive, two miles north from the district offices and Middle School and High School campus. The school contains an ABC Pre-K program that serves 40 Pre-K students and grades K-4. The campus was built in the late 1980's and is in good facilities condition. Behind the school is the district softball, baseball, and soccer practice field. The average class size at MES is 13, the student to teacher ratio is 10:1 and the average years of teaching experience is 12. 23% of the students are eligible to receive special education. 79% of our students qualify for free and reduced lunch. Student demographics at MES include 91.2% Caucasian, 4.8% American Indian, .4% Asian, .9% Black/African American, and 1.8% Hispanic/Latin American, with .9% reporting two or more races.

Mountainburg Middle School is located on 129 Hwy 71 SW in the center of town, adjacent to the High School campus and the district office. The school serves 194 students in grades 5-8. The campus was built in the 1960's and remodeled in the 1980's with facilities in fair condition. The average class size at MMS is 12, the

student to teacher ratio is 7:1 and the average years of teaching experience is 16.5. 16% of the students are eligible to receive special education. 73% of our students qualify for free and reduced lunch. Student demographics at MES include 91.7% Caucasian, 5.78% American Indian, .0% Asian, .0% Black/African American, and 2.6% Hispanic/Latin American.

Mountainburg High School is located on 129 Hwy 71 SW in the center of town, adjacent to the Middle School campus and the district office. The school serves 209 students in grades 9-12. Buildings on the campus were built over a time span from 1935 to 2018, with the FEMA safe room and PE facility being the most recent addition. The average class size at MHS is 8, the student to teacher ratio is 6:1, and the average years of teaching experience is 8.58. 16% of the students are eligible to receive special education. 68% of our students qualify for free and reduced lunch. Student demographics at MHS include 95.1% Caucasian, 2.4% American Indian, .5% Asian, .5% Black/African American, and 1% Hispanic/Latin American. The college going rate for MHS is 34% and the graduation rate is 83%. **See Student demographics.**

Community Information.

Student enrollment has been steadily declining over the past ten years, with enrollment down from an average of 775 in the early 2000's to our current level. Our current enrollment projection shows a continuing decline since we have a large class of graduating seniors in the Class of '19 with 67 seniors, and a kindergarten enrollment of 33 students.

This decrease in enrollment can be contributed to many factors: Mountainburg has 30 students who leave the district under School Choice and 21 students enrolled under School Choice in the 2018-2019. There are 25 student in the district who file intent to home school. The manufacturing jobs in the river valley that employed our families for years, such as Rheem, Whirlpool, Therma-Tru, etc. have shifted. Our community is aging and keep their lands and farms in their families. Family size is declining, there is little quality, affordable housing, and few jobs in the community. Interstate I-540 takes traffic off of Highway 71, and our family owned and operated grocery store closed after 60 years of service. Local businesses include a Dollar General store, a convenience store and gas station near town, a burger stand, and pizza den, a post office, a bank, a resale shop, and City Hall/Community Center. Lake Fort Smith State Park made Mountainburg a destination for a number of years, with the swimming pool, tennis courts, and spillway. When the City of Fort Smith enlarged the public water supply they closed the park to increase the dam. A beautiful new state park opened years later but it is located several miles north of the town and is not a town center with walking trails and hangouts the way the former park was for generations. The City of Fort Smith purchases land near and around the water supply and gets the property tax exempt. There are 50,000 acres of tax exempt land in our school district. While the City of Fort Smith makes a voluntary payment of \$5,700 in lieu of taxes, we do not collect any revenue for the property, decreasing our ability to support debt service for special projects for the district. The aspect of declining enrollment paints a grim picture for the district, making all that much more important that will we innovate and energize our faculty and staff and our practices.

Describe the innovations that will distinguish the charter from other schools in the geographical area to be served by the charter. Consider noting if the innovations described are considered research-based best practices and/or if these innovations have been successful in other educational programs. The applicant may list as few or as many innovations as they deem appropriate for their proposed charter.

Applicant Response:

Innovation for Student Academic Growth: A key component to student achievement is adjusting our methods of instruction as well as our curriculum. Regarding curriculum shifts, our hope is to use Project Lead the Way (PLTW) to support our STEM initiative and R.I.S.E. Arkansas strategies and methods to support our teachers as the shift from a 50 minute period of ELA instruction to 115 minutes of science of reading instruction throughout the day. STEM lessons, projects, and activities will be incorporated into both math and science classrooms. The science of reading strategies and methods will be taught in English and social studies classrooms with specific attention to phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension.

Regarding an adjustment in instruction, we will be working towards a more student-focused learning, we know through research and John Hattie's work that "Student Self-Reporting" has an effect size of 1.33 *the second highest impact according to 2018 revision of Visible Learning. We cannot stop with new curriculum and strategies, we must do whatever it takes to get students engaged in their own personal learning journey. Student-centered learning is essential to improving student achievement and meeting our mission.

Innovation for Student Physical Growth Mindset: A key component to developing a growth mindset in our students is to utilize what comes naturally to them (physical activity) to develop their confidence and self efficacy. Utilizing extended brain breaks and an outdoor challenge course as a way to encourage, chart, and assess student growth in physical health and achievement will be new for our school. This innovation is different from other schools in the area, because we will not stop with the basic implementation of physical activity. The vision behind extended brain breaks is more in-depth. Our primary focus in improving student self efficacy is to coach students in their journey of discovering their personal limits, and then giving them the resources and skills to exceed those limits. These skills must be taught, practiced, and measured. Improving students' growth mindset and self efficacy has too high an impact on student achievement to ignore. We believe thinking about physical activity and extended brain breaks in terms of improving the student's overall ability to believe he or she can conquer any challenge will give him or her skill sets to tackle their academic challenges at a much greater success rate.

Innovation for student emotional and social growth: A key component to our student apathy towards academic achievement has a lot to do with lack of confidence, an inability to look beyond short-term rewards, and an overall lack of understanding the impact of choices (good and bad). We believe the implementation of a Focus 3 culture is vital to adjusting these cultural behaviors. Focus 3 will be integrated using a very systematic approach; addressing the leadership team first, teachers second, and students last. Our hope is to begin training teachers the first year of implementation in order to gain a solid foundation for how we do things differently in our new school. Focus 3 teaches positive life skills including: ways to address personal and professional relationships, habits that encourage grit and determination in difficult situations, ideas for setting aside old negative habits (like complaining and blaming) and replacing those habit with productive behaviors (like using and accepting constructive criticism and "pressing pause" before speaking in challenging conversations).

3. On the following table, list the specific measurable goals in reading, English, writing, mathematics, and science, based on the state mandated assessments, and any other assessment tools if used, for improving student academic achievement for each year of the public charter school's initial five-year period. For each goal, include the following:
 - The tool to be used to measure the academic performance;
 - The level of performance that will demonstrate success; and
 - The timeframe for the achievement of the goal.

GOAL	Assessment Instrument for Measuring Performance	Performance Level that Demonstrates Achievement	When Attainment of the Goal Will Be Assessed
Increase in student achievement in Literacy	ACT Aspire Reading, Writing, English	Meet or exceed state average in Literacy	Annually with state required assessment

Increase in Student Self Efficacy	Digital Student Portfolios where students develop, track, monitor personal goals	Meet or exceed personal goals	Assessed frequently during advisory
Increase in Student Achievement in math and science	ACT Aspire Science and Math; Programming offered	Meet or exceed state average in Math and Science	Annually with state required assessment

Explain how the attainment of the goals will demonstrate that the charter is meeting the identified educational need for the school and fulfilling its mission.

Applicant Response:

If any the goals are met to any degree, we will know that the charter is assisting us in fulfilling our mission. Even if we do not meet or exceed state averages in English, math, or science, we fully expect to see growth. Growth is our focus. Mountainburg Middle School has a need to increase student achievement, and we will measure how well we are meeting our goals on a regular basis. As we meet a goal, we will adjust and increase our current improvement plan as we see necessary to continue the work we have committed to in beginning the Brain Academy.

- For elementary charter schools, provide a proposed daily schedule for all grade levels indicating the classes that will be provided for a one week time period. For secondary schools, provide required and elective courses for every grade level. If the school plans to phase in grade levels, include expansion grade levels by year with courses to be offered.

Please note that depending on how the school is structured, middle grades could be considered part of an elementary school, a middle school, or a high school.

MIDDLE SCHOOL COURSES

GRADE(S): 5 YEAR OFFERED: 2019-2020

REQUIRED COURSES

- English

- Math _____
- Science _____
- Social Studies _____
- Physical Education _____
- Fine Arts _____
- Computer Technology/Keyboarding _____
- _____
- _____

ELECTIVE COURSES

- _____

GRADE(S): 6 YEAR OFFERED: 2019-2020

REQUIRED COURSES

- English _____
- Math _____
- Science _____
- Social Studies _____
- Physical Education _____
- Fine arts _____

ELECTIVE COURSES

- Project Lead the Way _____
- _____

GRADE(S): 7 YEAR OFFERED: 2019-2020

REQUIRED COURSES

- English _____
- Math _____
- Science _____
- Social Studies _____

ELECTIVE COURSES

- Physical Education or Athletics _____
 - Band or Art _____
 - Project Lead the Way electives _____
-

GRADE(S): 8 YEAR OFFERED: 2019-2020

REQUIRED COURSES

- English _____
- Math _____
- Science _____
- Social Studies _____

ELECTIVE COURSES

- Project Lead the Way electives _____
 - Physical Education or Athletics _____
 - Band or Art _____
 - Career Development _____
-

5. Describe the educational program to be offered by the charter school. Provide a description of curriculum, programs, and instructional methods used to support core classes. Please ensure that curriculum is aligned with the Arkansas Department of Education strategic goals. Explain how the district will pay for all associated costs.

Applicant Response:

Description of Curriculum:

Given appropriate time and support teachers will develop digital curriculum maps specific to their content area. This will be accomplished through the PLC process. Teachers will have a schedule that allows for 40 minutes of collaboration with other teachers who are teaching the same group of students. These PLC meetings will take place once a week in addition to teachers' individual planning time. The PLC process will be an imperative piece to developing a guaranteed and viable curriculum. Teachers will choose essential standards, break them into learning targets, teach those targets, and assess student achievement in 4-week learning cycles. Teachers' instructional methods will be monitored and adjusted according to student assessment data (common formative assessments). Additionally curriculum (not standards) will adjust when and if necessary.

Description of Programs:

The educational program is described in detail throughout this application.

Description of Instructional Methods:

Instruction will be delivered in a variety of ways. We want to offer a student-centered approach to content delivery where students have options included computer-based, project-based, teacher-led direct instruction, content workshops led by students, private tutor sessions, and flexibility when students need to be re-taught the material.

Supporting Core Classes:

Brain Academy will have a Response to Intervention that is both personal, and responsive. Using a scheduling program (RTI Scheduler) that allows teachers to "draft" students into a 40 minute course for remediation or "release" students to attend a 40 minute enrichment course allows necessary remediation to occur within a three day time period of student assessments.

Alignment with State Standards:

Arkansas state standards will drive the curriculum in all content areas of the Brain Academy. All courses offered will be fully aligned to the Arkansas Academic Standards

Complete the chart to explain how the key features of the program will be afforded.

EXPENSES TO BE INCURRED BY NEW CHARTER

Specific Item/Program/Service	Estimated Cost	
Gametime Youth Challenge Fitness Course	<u>\$95,000.00</u>	
Description of New Funds to Pay for Item/Program/Service <i>If private, include an attachment to demonstrate commitment.</i>		Amount
Seeking grant funding through charter grant or Blue and You Foundation		<u>\$95,000.00</u>
Prior Year Item/Program/Service Expense Reduced to Fund Charter <i>If applicable.</i>		Amount of Reduction
	No variance.	
Explanation		

Specific Item/Program/Service	Estimated Cost	Amount
Project Lead the Way Gateway	\$50,000.00	
Description of New Funds to Pay for Item/Program/Service <i>If private, include an attachment to demonstrate commitment.</i>		
Seeking charter grant funds		\$50,000.00
Prior Year Item/Program/Service Expense Reduced to Fund Charter <i>If applicable.</i>		Amount of Reduction
Explanation	No variance.	

6. Explain why a charter school is necessary to better meet student academic needs instead of a traditional district school.

Applicant Response:

Facing declining enrollment, the district must be resourceful with limited and shared staff and resources. The ability to seek waivers and flexibility will allow us to problem solve and creatively design solutions to the challenges we face as we utilize the resources of time, people and funds available. The funds from the charter grant will give us the means to train, innovate and redesign our traditional school to meet our needs.

Also, facing competition from school choice, virtual school, home school, and larger schools that are able to offer more electives, activities and competitive programs, Mountainburg Middle School recognizes the need to improve results and be creative and innovative. This is an opportunity to re-design our schools and our identity, and generate excitement about the school.

7. Explain how the charter school will have more autonomy than traditional schools in the district. Discuss each of the following:
- A) Employing personnel;
 - B) Developing and controlling the charter school budget;
 - C) Managing day-to-day charter school operations;
 - D) Developing and controlling the school calendar; and
 - E) Other areas of autonomy to be afforded to the charter.

Applicant Response:

Employing personnel:

Personnel are interviewed by committee comprised of the supervisor of the position, members of the team serving with the position, and the superintendent. Recommendations for hire are made by the superintendent and approved by the board.

Budget:

The majority of the expenses are fixed expenses for operating costs, salaries and benefits. The building will determine the priority of implementation and therefore spending priorities for available categorical funds such as NSL and grant funds if available.

Managing Day to Day operations:

As a conversion charter, the day-to-day operations currently in place would remain, with the principal and teachers working collaboratively in teams to implement the initiatives.

Developing and controlling the school calendar:

Input for school calendar is gathered from staff and parents in the fall. A draft is adopted by the board in December and presented to the PPC for acceptance or counter-proposals. The calendar is then approved at the January meeting.

Other areas:

Other areas would be considered as the need presented.

8. Describe the school improvement plan by addressing the following:
- A) Explain how and how often the licensed employees and parents of the students to be enrolled in the charter school will be involved in developing and implementing the school improvement plan, identifying performance criteria, and evaluating the effectiveness of the improvement plan.

Applicant Response:

The school improvement plan is integrated into the work of the professional learning teams, as they meet weekly to examine data, identify learning targets, plan instruction, teach, assess, monitor learning, and respond to remediate or extend learning on a continual basis. The building will lead a similar cycle of plan-do-check for implementation of the initiatives of the charter, involving teachers, students, and parents in the process, using monthly Dragon Family Council meetings to report progress and gather input.

B) Describe a plan for school improvement that addresses how the charter school will improve student learning and meet the stated education goals.

Applicant Response:

Brain Academy will align with our districts school improvement plan. This plan has three components:

1. Deliver a guaranteed and viable curriculum. Brain Academy will accomplish this through the PLC process: closely monitoring students assessment data, gathering and disseminating data on a monthly basis, as well as monitoring teacher effectiveness through consistent classroom walk-throughs, effectively keeping track of teachers' professional growth plans, and addressing areas of growth promptly and consistently.

2. Provide Time and Support to ensure all learn at high levels. Brain Academy will accomplish this through an improved schedule that allows 40 minutes a day to address teacher, student, and culture needs. This period will be called "The Grind". During this time the school provides opportunities for teachers to meet with other to plan, assess their own success or challenges, gauge what instructional strategies are working and get advice from effective teachers on how to improve their practice. Additionally, this time allows opportunities for teachers to meet with students in a smaller classroom setting and work on individual learning targets with which particular group of students need help. "The Grind" is 40 minutes every single day where we can work hard at the craft of teaching and improving our strategies to meet the specific needs of our students. It is also a time for students to increase their awareness of their own academic goals and take some ownership about how to improve. "The GRIND" is a messy place where failures are learning opportunities and we work as a team to become Dragon STRONG!

The Grind is additional time and support that teachers and students have never had before. We are excited about The Grind.

3. Install a culture that trains and motivates all to perform at high levels. Brain Academy will accomplish this through the Focus 3 culture play book. Our teachers will use the play book to continually address negative behavior and consistently promote positive behaviors. Our culture play book and on line courses will be just a few tools teachers will use to train students to perform at high levels.

The three components of our district and school improvement plan will naturally assist us in achieving our four goals through the Brain Academy: Growth in Literacy, Growth in Self-Efficacy, Increase in satisfaction n self-reported team sports, and Growth in STEM

9. Describe the ongoing process that will be used to ensure all curriculum materials used in the educational program are aligned with the Arkansas Academic Standards as adopted, and periodically revised, by the State Board of Education.

Applicant Response:

The Brain Academy will follow the PLC process to ensure that all curriculum materials meet the Arkansas Academic Standards. There will be time built in for teachers to meet, discuss data, and collaborate on curriculum. Teachers will ask, "what is it we want our students to know?", "How do we know they have learned it?", "What will we do when they don't learn?", and "How will we extend when they do learn?". Teachers will create essential standards for each program from the Arkansas Academic Standards. They will create formative assessments for students and they will collect the data to improve learning. When students meet the desired goal, they will be enriched. Students will be retaught standards to mastery.

10. Describe the manner in which the school will make provisions for the following student services, even in each area for which a waiver is requested:

A) Guidance program;

Applicant Response:

Mountainburg Public Schools will utilize the Guidance programs currently in place, employing a .5 counselor to serve students in grades 5-8 and a partnership agreement with a mental health care provider for on-site mental health counselors.

B) Health services;

Applicant Response:

Mountainburg Public schools employs a licensed practitioner nurse to provide health services, and contracts a RN to supervise the LPN. The LPN serves both Mountainburg High School .5 FTE and Mountainburg Middle School .5 FTE on the shared campus.

Mountainburg Middle School also partners with the Mountainburg Family Medical Clinic to offer school based health clinic services, providing medical treatment to students at no cost.

C) Media center;

Applicant Response:

Mountainburg Middle School offers a library media center with a .5 FTE Library Media Specialist and a media center assistant.

D) Special education, including appropriate state assessments for special education students;

Applicant Response:

Mountainburg Middle School provide services for indirect, inclusion, resource, and self-contained special education students as per IDEA. Special Education students participate in state assessments as per rules and regulations.

E) Dyslexia services;

Applicant Response:

Mountainburg Public Schools provides services for dyslexia by a dyslexia specialist using a research based, approved dyslexia intervention as per rules and regulations.

F) Transportation;

Applicant Response:

Mountainburg Public Schools provides bus transportation to and from school.

G) Alternative education, including Alternative Learning Environments;

Applicant Response:

Mountainburg Public schools provides an approved Alternative Learning Environment as per rules and regulations.

H) English Language Learner (ELL) instruction, including appropriate state assessments for English Language Proficiency; and

Applicant Response:

Mountainburg Public Schools will provide English Language Learners instruction, including appropriate state assessments for English Language Proficiency, as per rules and regulations.

I) Gifted and Talented Program.

Applicant Response:

Mountainburg Public Schools will provide Gifted and Talented program as per rules and regulations. In addition, students will have time and support to extend learning through enrichment opportunities on an on-going weekly advisory and enrichment period.

11. Describe the plan for the school officials to provide an annual report to parents, the community, and the authorizer, **separate from the district's annual report to the public**, that demonstrates the progress made by the charter school during the previous academic year in meeting its academic performance objectives. (See Arkansas Code Annotated 6-23-202.)

Applicant Response:

Mountainburg Public Schools organizes and facilitates a monthly Dragon Family & Community Council meeting. The purpose of the Dragon Council is to inform parents of school initiatives and activities, to provide parents resources to promote learning, and to gather parent and community input and support. Following meetings, notes from the meetings are posted on the webpage and shared by email. An annual report, separate from the district's annual report to the public, will be held to share with parents and community. Reports will be provided to the authorizer as per guidance.

12. Describe the enrollment criteria and student admission, recruitment, and selection processes for the proposed public charter school.

Applicant Response:

Mountainburg Middle School Brain Academy charter request seeks authorizer approval as a conversion charter. Only In-District students may apply. Students living outside the boundaries of the Mountainburg Public Schools are subject to all district transfer regulations. In compliance with ADE Accreditation Standard 6.01 all policies and actions related to enrollment criteria and student admission, recruitment, and selection processes are nondiscriminatory and are in compliance with all state and federal laws.

It is affirmed that a random, anonymous student selection method will be utilized in the event that more students apply for admission to the public charter school than can be accommodated under the terms of the charter, except as allowed for in Arkansas Code Annotated §6-23-306(14)(C).

Yes

No

13. Name any district personnel, and/or leaders of the proposed charter who have any prior involvement in the operation of one or more other charter schools and complete a Prior Charter Involvement **template** for each individual listed.

Applicant Response:

Dr. Debbie Atwell assisted with development of the charter application for the Rogers New Technology High Charter in 2012.

14. Summarize the job descriptions of the school director and other key personnel by completing the information fields below for each position. Specify the salary range, qualifications, and job duties to be met by professional employees (administrators, teachers, and support staff) of the program. Please describe the plan for providing teachers with continuous professional development.

Applicant Response:

ADMINISTRATORS

Administrator Position: Superintendent

Reports to: School Board

Salary Range: .65 index of current salary schedule (\$71,000 - \$106,000)

Minimum Qualifications Required

Education Required:

Masters of Education in Educational Leadership

Experience Required:

Previous experience as building level administrator

Certification Required:

District Administrator Licensure

Job Duties: List up to 5 key duties this individual will perform.

- Manage the physical, fiscal, and human resources of the District
- Communicate effectively with the Board, Faculty & Staff, and community
- Serve as ex-officio for the District
- Possess and apply necessary organizational/supervisory skills for the job
- Promote improved academic achievement as well as improved instruction

Administrator Position: Principal for Teaching and Learning

Reports to: Superintendent

Salary Range: .45 index based on current salary schedule (\$63,000 - \$95,000)

Minimum Qualifications Required

Education Required:

Masters degree or higher

Experience Required:

Successful instructional leadership

Certification Required:

Building Level Administrator Licensure

Job Duties: List up to 5 key duties this individual will perform.

- Evaluation and Supervision of teachers
- Serves as the instructional leader, supervising curriculum and instruction
- Establishes and monitors school budget
- Leads professional learning teams and school improvement
- Directs the personal and educational development of of students

Administrator Position: Student Performance Specialist

Reports to: Principal

Salary Range: (\$32,800 - \$55,700)

Minimum Qualifications Required

Education Required:

Bachelors Degree

Experience Required:

Successful classroom experience

Certification Required:

Arkansas certification

Job Duties: List up to 5 key duties this individual will perform.

- gather, monitor, and assess student performance data
- support teachers in student behavior issues
- develop and continually build culture within the school
- facilitate PLC for student performance and behavior

TEACHERS

Teacher Position: **Classroom Teachers (approx 11) plus shared staff for encore subjects**

Reports to: Principal

Salary Range: \$32,800 - \$55,714

Professional Development: Teachers will participate in 60 hours of professional development annually, as well as weekly job-embedded professional development during team meetings.

Minimum Qualifications Required

Education Required:

Bachelor degree or higher

Experience Required:

none

Certification Required:

Arkansas certification

Job Duties: List up to 5 key duties this individual will perform.

- Plan and deliver effective instruction to ensure high levels of learning in content and skill
 - Manage and organize resources efficiently
 - Lead student and encourage student responsibility, involvement, and critical thinking
 - Communicate and involve parents and community in the learning process
 - Provide assessment, feedback and growth for learning
-

SUPPORT STAFF

Support Staff Position: **Secretary**

Reports to: Principal

Salary Range: \$21,300 - \$23,100

Minimum Qualifications Required

Education Required:

high school diploma

Experience Required:

previous clerical experience

Certification Required:

none

Job Duties: List up to 5 key duties this individual will perform.

- Manage accurate records, data, reporting, records, etc
 - Greet and correspond with parents and community
 - Communicate daily activities, announcements
 - Deposit activity funds and oversee building purchasing processes
 - Coordinate and assist substitutes as needed
-

Support Staff Position: LPN

Reports to: Principal

Salary Range: \$16,000 - \$19,000

Minimum Qualifications Required

Education Required:
License for nursing

Experience Required:
2 years recommended

Certification Required:
n/a

Job Duties: List up to 5 key duties this individual will perform.

- facilitate health and medical programs
 - provide medical care as needed
-

Support Staff Position: Educational Assistance

Reports to: principal

Salary Range: \$15,000 - \$19,000

Minimum Qualifications Required

Education Required:
high school diploma

Experience Required:
none

Certification Required:
n/a

Job Duties: List up to 5 key duties this individual will perform.

- assist and supervise students in need of remediation

Job Duties: List up to 5 key duties this individual will perform.

- assist classroom / work under certified teacher's directive
-

Support Staff Position: Bus Drivers

Reports to: Transportation Director

Salary Range: \$10,800 - \$13,000

Minimum Qualifications Required

Education Required:

CDL

Experience Required:

none

Certification Required:

CDL

Job Duties: List up to 5 key duties this individual will perform.

- transport students safely to and from school events
-

15. It is affirmed that the Arkansas Public School Computer Network (APSCN) Financial Management System, provided by the Department of Education, shall be the original and official accounting system of record for the public charter school as required by state law and the rules and regulations of the Department of Education for all financial transaction records and reporting (including, but not limited to, payroll processing and wage and tax reporting to IRS, ATRS, DFA, etc., accounts payable, fixed assets, personnel budgeting, and budgeting). APSCN shall be used to record all private, as well as, local, state, and federal revenues and expenditures.

Yes

No

It is affirmed that the Arkansas Public School Computer Network (APSCN) Student Management System, provided by the Department of Education, shall be the original and official student management system for the public charter school as required by state law and the rules and regulations of the Department of Education for all student management areas (including, but not limited to, systems administration, demographics, attendance, scheduling, report cards, discipline, medical, Cognos reporting, and Statewide Information System reporting).

Yes

No

16. Describe the facilities to be used. Give the present use of the facility.

Applicant Response:

Mountainburg Middle School is located at 129 Hwy 71 SW. The campus was originally built in the 1950's and was renovated in 1997. The Middle School campus joins the High School campus and a cafeteria is shared. The campus consists of a building with 5th and 6th grade classrooms, the main campus with 7th and 8th grade classrooms, a student commons, media center, a gym, and a playground.

The facility will be in compliance with all requirements for accessibility in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and all other state and federal laws and local zoning ordinances.

Yes

No

If the facility does not currently meet these requirements, provide a list of items that will need to be addressed to bring the facility into compliance. Also include a statement of permissible uses for the facility from the local zoning authority, and whether there are any alcohol sales within 1,000 feet of the facility.

Applicant Response:

There are no alcohol sales within 1,000 feet of the school facility.

17. Describe the manner in which the school will make provisions for food services. State whether the proposed charter school will apply to participate in the federal National School Lunch program or other federal nutrition programs.

Applicant Response:

Mountainburg Public Schools will provide food services, participating in the federal National School Lunch program. The District currently participates in the CEP program, providing free breakfast and lunch to all students.

18. Explain how the success of the charter school will be ensured if changes in leadership and board composition occur.

Applicant Response:

Mountainburg School District and Board of Directors have a close relationship as well as a system in place for communicating the details, needs, and successes of the school on a weekly basis. Monthly community meetings are held in which other stakeholders are invited and welcome to participate in an open dialogue about the future of the school. During any monthly board meetings, any significant changes or concerns would be addressed and the fidelity of the program would be protected by the current mission and vision.

19. Describe the potential impact of the proposed public charter school on the efforts of affected public school district(s) to comply with court orders and statutory obligations to create and maintain a unitary system of desegregated public schools.

Applicant Response:

The granting of a conversion charter to Mountainburg Middle School Brain Academy will have no effect on any Arkansas public school district's efforts to comply with court orders and statutory obligations to create and maintain a unitary system of desegregated public schools. The Mountainburg Public School District is not under any federal desegregation order and neither are any of the surrounding districts.

20. Complete the following table showing all sections of Title 6 of the Arkansas Code Annotated (Education Code) and State Board of Education rules, including the *Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts*, from which the public charter school seeks to be exempted in order to meet the goals of the school. Identify the specific statute, rule, or standard requested to be waived by title and number if applicable. **Provide a rationale for each waiver requested that explains how the waiver will assist the charter in achieving the previously stated goals (see prompt #4), and explain how those goals will be achieved if the waiver is not granted.**

Applicant Response:

Waiver Topic: Educator Licensure

Statute/Standard/Rule to be Waived

Arkansas Code Annotated

Code Number	Code Title
● Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-309	Certification to teach grade or subject matter—Exceptions—Waivers
● Ark. Code Ann. § 6-17-401	Teacher licensure requirement

Rationale for Waiver

In our Brain Academy there will be a new shift in the way we teach content, monitor physical activity through extended Brain Breaks, and mentor/coach student throughout a more individualized and student-centered learning plan. Having flexibility in how we hired teachers and use teachers would help us meets some the academic, physical, and emotional/social goals we are trying to meet.

Waiver Topic: Flexible Schedule

Statute/Standard/Rule to be Waived

Arkansas Code Annotated

Code Number	Code Title
● Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-210	Definition of planned instructional time
● Ark. Code Ann. § 6-16-102	School day hours

Rationale for Waiver

Waiver for Definition of planned instructional time would allow us flexibility in using teacher planning to support our growing PLC plan.

Waiver for School Day Hours would give us some additional opportunities to offer RTI for students who continue to struggle academically despite RTI time offered in the school day. More than 6/10 of our students are in need of support in reading and math. We are looking for any way we can find more time in the day to address these students.

Waiver Topic: Class Size and Teaching Load

Statute/Standard/Rule to be Waived**Rationale for Waiver**

Waiver for class size would allow Brain Academy to hold larger classes for physical activity and extended brain breaks. If one teacher can work through the students' physical course with 30-40 students, the other teacher could use the physical activity time to re-teach to learners who are not quite ready to move on with the rest of the class. This idea would be a response to an daily formative assessment. These students would still attend physical activity, but have time and a teacher to address their academic challenges first.
