



1.0 Watershed Philosophy

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An organizational philosophy describes how you operate, what you offer and how you are organized to meet your goals. Expand on mission statement Such a statement establishes the values, beliefs, and guidelines for the way the organization conducts its business and determines its relationship with its stakeholders—employees, customers, shareholders, suppliers, government, and the public at large.

Guiding Principles

Parents, families and our community as partners.

We want to personally know the teachers, parents, students and families at our school. We will work together in partnership to support the social, emotional, and academic needs of our students. We will build upon relationships with strong organizations and partners in our community, bringing their knowledge and wisdom into the classroom and into our whole-family programming. We will support family-oriented events and foster a spirit of cooperation to develop a tightly knit community.

Children need to be challenged within a supportive academic learning environment.

Social needs and life skills should be part of learning.

Collaboration, teamwork, and a safe learning environment are motivators for children as they help to build individual self-esteem as well as a cohesive learning community. Students will develop respect for themselves, respect for others, and for our natural environment. By using an emergent curriculum that adapts with student interests and focuses on mindfulness, we will guide and support our students while also challenging them to grow academically and socially and to develop 21st-century leadership and life skills.

Our instructors need the time and support to develop meaningful lessons and connections for our students.

We feel it is extremely important for our educators to have the time and space to collaborate

across subjects and grade levels, and we will facilitate that process with increased co-planning time. We will support and coach our educators to work across disciplines incorporating best practices into every lesson. Specials Teachers will assist with the integration of multiple content areas and the arts into classroom lessons.

We will continually adapt and grow innovative, progressive approaches to teaching and learning.

While state-of-the-art technology and advanced curricula are valuable to a child's academic development, we also recognize and value the multi-sensory learning opportunities that are fostered through learning in the outdoors. Hands on experiential curriculum that links disciplines together into larger multidisciplinary projects will comprise the core of our instruction. Arts, technology, sustainable agriculture, and language will be incorporated holistically across the curriculum. We will include cutting edge technology like 3-D printing and robotics in ways that enhance instruction rather than replacing it. Technology and nature are not mutually exclusive. Classes will be smaller than a traditional public school. We will incorporate assessment for learning to chart our student's growth over time to support and augment required standardized testing.

Integration of the arts foster creativity and support and enhance learning.

We value student-directed play and exploration as an opportunity for learning, skill-building, and social development in all grades. Music, art, dance, and theater are part of the culture and daily routines of students. Experiential learning supports a student's imagination and creativity while also improving their knowledge retention. When students are engaged and invested in their work, they are excited to learn. By encouraging student's artistic inclinations, instructors are able to guide and challenge students while identifying emerging interests that can later be woven into lessons and curriculum.

Every voice recognized.

We strive to highlight the special talent in each child and will work hard in our effort for full inclusion. We welcome students with special needs and students who speak English as a second language. We do not discriminate on the basis of culture, religion, race, or sexual orientation, and believe that our differences strengthen and improve both social and academic outcomes. Diverse schools promote the celebration and understanding of other cultures and viewpoints, crucial to becoming a globally competitive citizen in our world.

A workshop environment that promotes experimentation and allows for failure.

One of the key components of a workshop environment that fosters creative problem solving

and imagination is the allowance for failure. Students should feel comfortable, confident, and supported in taking risks, but also understand that not every experiment is a success. A true workshop supports healthy competition, both collaborative and self directed exploration, and ownership of projects. Our innovative media center and workshop space design is a thoughtfully designed physical environment that includes age appropriate study nooks and play spaces, a traditional library, a makerspace with plenty of tinkering space, a seed library, and a nature library.

Environment as classroom.

Our outdoor space, farm, and outdoor classrooms enhance lessons and are an integral part of instruction. Rather than occasionally visiting natural areas on a field trip, our students interact and learn from their surroundings daily. There is a tremendous amount to learn from the natural world across curriculums. By using the environment as an integrating context for learning we are tapping into decades of research that demonstrates this framework, engages students, inspires teachers, and improves test scores. By incorporating a farm that produces food we connect students directly to growing, harvesting, and eating healthy food. We hope to incorporate an educational kitchen space in the future. These hands-on learning opportunities will be integrated with core subjects like math and science in addition to teaching students about where their food comes from and the importance of the food system.