

# Volunteer and Observation Guidelines

Families are a crucial part of building the school community and WCS. There are many ways that parents can get involved in school life and culture.

Families are asked to contribute in a variety of ways to WCS. We set annual goals for volunteer hours, in-kind donations, and fund-raising and encourage every family to participate, as possible. Details on volunteer opportunities are available in our Parental Involvement Policy and on the school's website.

Families are encouraged to learn about Waldorf education, attend workshops and parent evenings, and incorporate the principles of rhythm and healthy development which undergird Waldorf education into their homes and family lives. Attendance at workshops and events may be counted as volunteer hours, when advertised as such.

Families are welcome to attend regularly scheduled public tours of the school (typically offered on Wednesday mornings) to ask questions and make general observations regarding instruction and methods.

Classroom observations and volunteer experiences must be arranged with the teacher in charge (either class teachers or specialty teachers) in advance. Waldorf teachers strive to maintain a rhythm and order within their classrooms that requires the teacher to be the clear authority and hold very specific expectations for student behavior and work. Unexpected visitors and many adults in the classrooms can compromise this process. Thus, teachers must have advance notice and consent to the timing and scope of parental involvement and observations.

With teacher approval, parents may observe and volunteer in the classroom. Parents are expected to:

- Submit to and pass a background check upon entering the school building,
- Sign in at the front desk and receive a badge to wear while on school grounds,
- Follow all directions given by the teachers,
- Not interfere with directions / instruction / discipline,
- Follow the WCS Code of Conduct,
- Refrain from the use of cell phones / other electronic devices while at the school,
- Never attempt to discipline a child,
- Abide by confidentiality and privacy expectations,
- Leave younger siblings and non-WCS students at home (unless alternative arrangements have been made with the class teacher, in advance).

Should a parent not abide by the expectations above, then s/he may be asked by a teacher or the school's administration to not observe / volunteer in the classroom or to make arrangements directly through school administration who will coordinate with teachers and ensure that appropriate behaviors and boundaries are respected.

## Code of Conduct

All students, faculty, and parents at Wasatch Charter School will conduct themselves in a manner that contributes to a productive, safe, happy, inviting learning environment for themselves and others. All are expected to be kind, respectful, attentive, and cooperative with others in the school community.

- Students will be on time and ready to participate each day and work diligently on their studies, as directed by their teachers. Students will abide by the dress code. They will demonstrate respect and care in their use of school property and resources, including following rules regarding the acceptable

use of electronic devices and resources. Students will not bring to the school nor use any harmful or illegal items or substances while on school property or at an event sponsored by or affiliated with the School.

· Students who engage in dangerous or disruptive conduct that disturbs the learning of others, disrespect teachers and administrators, threaten or harm others, damage school property, or violate WCS's policies and procedures shall be subject to discipline, and potentially to suspension or expulsion as outlined in the Safe Schools Policy which is available on the school's website (Governing Board: Policies: Safe Schools).

## Confidentiality

The well-being and atmosphere of the school as a whole rely on the ability of the faculty, staff and parents to engage in dialogue regarding concerns and conflicts with appropriate sensitivity and confidentiality, and to comply with the policies of the school. During your visits to WCS, you may periodically learn sensitive information about this school, about parents, students, and/or colleagues through your observations. It is important that you keep information you learn through your volunteer and observation experience confidential. From time to time you may be involved in situations or conflicts with parents. Other parents will perhaps approach you out of curiosity or concern and want to discuss the situation. You must maintain a polite diplomacy in these conversations, and explain that you are unable to share details because of the confidentiality of the situation.

## Student Records

FERPA is a federal law that protects the privacy interests of students. It affords parents the right to access and request that their children's education records be amended, and gives them some control over the disclosure of the information in these records. FERPA generally prevents schools from sharing student records, or personally identifiable information in these records, without the written consent of a parent, except as provided by law.

At WCS we respect student and family privacy, which mean that we never discuss an individual student with a member of the staff, another teacher, or a parent if that individual is not someone who has a legitimate need to know. This is particularly true of any situation involving grades, evaluations, or assessments; student discipline; student health; or aspects of a student's home or family situation.

Notwithstanding anything in this policy, when a school employee believes that a situation exists which presents a serious threat to the well-being of the student, the employee must notify the student's parent or guardian without delay, unless the matter has already been reported to DCFS, in which case it is the responsibility of DCFS to notify the student's parent or guardian of any possible investigation or take other appropriate action.

Notwithstanding anything in this policy, when a school employee believes that a student is at-risk of attempting suicide, physical self-harm, or harming others, the employee may intervene and ask the student questions regarding the student's suicidal thoughts, physical self-harming behavior, or thoughts of harming others for the purposes of (1) referring the student to appropriate prevention services, and (2) informing the parent or legal guardian.

## Physical Contact with Students

All volunteers should be thoughtful and gentle in any physical contact that they may have with students, both to protect students and themselves. Should a student need to be restrained in order to prevent severe harm to self or others, the School's Safe Schools Policy and proper practices from training must be followed by staff.

Adults in the school are encouraged to:

- Shake students' hands,
- Hold students' hands, as appropriate, to guide a student or engage in a game / activity,
- Give a gentle or reassuring pat on the back,
- Give a squeeze or hug on the side,
- Gently guide a student with hands placed on the shoulders.

Adults in the school are not to:

- Hold children on their laps,
- Give full-body hugs to students,
- Ever touch students in anger or with an intent to coerce,
- Yank or pull on a child,
- Grab, hit, or engage in any physical aggression towards a student.

Volunteers should avoid being in a room alone with any student with the door closed. If helping a student in a bathroom or who is ill, in talking about a sensitive matter with a student, and in other circumstances, doors should be left open and/or other adults should be invited to be present.

*I understand that by the virtue of my agreement to volunteer at Wasatch Charter School, I may have access to records which contain individually identifiable information such as a social security number or student identification number, of which the disclosure is prohibited by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). FERPA is a Federal regulation that governs the privacy and disclosure of student records. I acknowledge that I fully understand that no student information is to be released to non-district personnel or third-parties. The intentional disclosure by me of this information violates FERPA policy and could subject me to criminal and civil penalties imposed by law. I further acknowledge that such willful or unauthorized disclosure could constitute just cause for termination of my volunteer services immediately regardless of whether criminal or civil penalties are imposed.*

*In relation to my observation or volunteer service, I must follow the guidelines outlined above. If my assigned responsibilities include access to student files, data, or information, I will abide by the confidentiality and privacy policies of WCS. I understand that if I have any questions regarding the disclosure of information, I must ask WCS administration prior to sharing any observations or information obtained in the course of my service.*

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SIGNATURE

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DATE

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NAME (print)