

WELLSPRINGS FRIENDS SCHOOL

**Understandings
And
Agreements**

2015-2016

MISSION

Wellsprings Friends School provides alternative learning approaches, supportive community, and a culture of individual affirmation, in which teenagers are mentored and assisted towards meeting the challenges of adolescence and adulthood.

GOALS

- To hire only people with the personal level of maturity to support the growth of each student.
- To mutually decide with prospective students if this school is a good match for them, being open to accept and give a chance to students as much as possible.
- To make education at Wellsprings an opening up, not a filling up; and to take the time to get to know each student and her/his individual learning needs.
- To nourish a community where each person feels accepted and appreciated, and physically and emotionally safe.
- To use dialoguing and problem-solving to deal with any issues that arise in the community.
- To help our students develop an internal sense of responsibility rather than relying on externally imposed controls.
- To assure delight in the ethnic, cultural, and social class diversity among our students and staff, and recognize that every individual experiences the world in a unique way.
- To assure that our educational practices are in harmony with the Earth and with natural processes; to learn about sustaining the intricate, subtle and powerful web of life within and all around ourselves.

NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

Wellsprings Friends School is an open and welcoming environment, where all people are respected. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin or sexual orientation in the administration of our educational policies, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, staff hiring, Trustee selection, or any other program or activity of the school.

STUDENT RECORDS

Student records will be kept confidential and released only upon the signed permission of a parent or legal guardian. Students are welcome to see their own files at any time upon request. Records for former students are kept on file and copies are available upon formal request.

BASIC AGREEMENTS

Agreement 1: I want to be here and will participate willingly in the Wellsprings community.

I understand that Wellsprings Friends School is a learning community with few but very meaningful traditions and expectations. School traditions include such things as Morning Circle, Community Meetings, Silent Meetings, and Friday Activities, which are part of a required credit-bearing class, "CB". Expectations include performing chores, respecting all persons, and respecting the property of others. *I agree to try to live up to the basic ideals of the school and to take part in community activities with a good will.*

Agreement 2: I am here to learn.

The mission of Wellsprings Friends School is education. While learning occurs all the time during the school day, class time is especially focused on content and processes that are important for my growth as a mature human being. I agree to attend my classes all or most of the time. I agree not to be disruptive to others during class time. I agree to take responsibility, in consultation with my advisor and other staff, for my education in general, and for meeting the specific requirements for graduation. I understand that learning requires consistent class attendance and participation in order to develop mastery of skills and intellectual growth in knowledge, critical thinking, and communication. *A minimum of 80% class attendance is essential for successful learning and full credit and graduating on time.*

Agreement 3: I will help create a safe emotional climate for everyone.

I understand that one aspect of Wellsprings Friends School that is extremely important to students and staff is the creation of a warm and supportive emotional environment. Many students here have had negative experiences at other schools with verbal abuse or physical bullying, and therefore rely on having a safe and comfortable environment at Wellsprings. I agree to avoid hurtful or insulting language and actions towards others, as well as any physical threats. *I will try to act in a respectful manner towards everyone at the school, including visitors, even though I may not like some individuals as friends.*

Agreement 4: I will resolve conflicts nonviolently and in a problem-solving spirit.

Conflict is a normal part of life, and so are strong emotions. When conflict and emotion result in violence, however, personal and community safety is threatened, and relationships are damaged. At Wellsprings, fighting or violent arguing are not appropriate. The Wellsprings way is dialogue and problem-solving, by means of mediation or other non-violent, healing approaches to establishing fair and just results that both parties can accept. *I agree to be willing to seek resolution of any conflict I have with others through non-violent, positive means.*

Agreement 5: I will refrain from using drugs or alcohol at school or at any school activity.

The use of drugs and alcohol is illegal, impedes learning, endangers health and safety, and degrades the reputation of the school. Furthermore, some students are recovering from addictive use in the past, and to encourage this recovery, a drug-free school environment is very important. *I agree not to attend classes or remain on campus if I am under the influence, and never to use or bring drugs or alcohol to school or any off-campus school activities such as field trips.*

THE RULE OF DECENCY

Expected behavior at Wellsprings is based on being decent to one another, or “the rule of decency” (our only rule). We do not wish to spell out all the “do’s” and “don’ts” that might occur in daily interactions, so we rely on each person developing and acting from an internal sense of responsibility. Wellsprings students and staff constantly demonstrate sincere caring and understanding towards others, in comforting people who are having a tough day, giving people space when they ask for it (verbally or non-verbally), and just being a lot of fun to hang out with and learn from each day. No place, no person is perfect, but here at Wellsprings we are proud of our community and proud of our holistic approach to education.

PROBLEM SOLVING

At Wellsprings, we do not believe in punishments, blaming, or labeling. Developing an internal sense of responsibility, rather than relying on externally imposed controls, is our goal for every individual in the community. Any issue or conflict that arises at Wellsprings will be dealt with in a problem-solving fashion. Typically, the persons involved will first meet with one or more staff members, and/or the Head of School and other students when appropriate. Causes will be examined and solutions explored. Follow-up meetings will be arranged if needed.

DRESS CODE

Everyone must wear clothes.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Wellsprings is committed to protecting the widest form and interpretation of free expression. At the same time, some limits are recognized, such as when someone’s oral, written, or pictorial expression is demeaning to another person or group, or merely vulgar without other purpose. In the rare instances when an individual’s choice of expression is questionable, a problem-solving meeting will be arranged.

HOUSEKEEPING

There are a lot of us occupying these premises daily five days a week; our facilities are shared with other groups on evenings and weekends; visitors, whether casual or on official business, frequently come by. So it is important at all times to keep every area of the school reasonably clean and neat. Each member of the community is expected to be mindful of cleanliness and to help in performing chores.

NEIGHBORLINESS

We wish to be good neighbors with respect to persons living on either side of the school, and also to persons passing by on the street. Students hanging out in front of the campus are expected to behave in a courteous manner towards all persons who pass by, whether pedestrians, LTD riders, or vehicle drivers. In particular, students must not occupy the bus shelter, which is intended only for LTD patrons to use. Our immediate neighbors’ property should be respected at all times.

ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to attend school all day, every day, unless they have a special schedule that requires them to be elsewhere part of the day.

Most learning experiences at WFS require consistent class attendance and participation in order to develop mastery of skills and intellectual growth in knowledge, critical thinking, and communication. Generally speaking, a minimum of 80% class attendance is essential for successful learning, and is therefore the minimum required to earn full credit.

Learning experiences are communal, not solitary activities. It is expected that students (and instructors) will be reasonably prompt for all class meetings. Instructors set guidelines as appropriate for each course. Consistent tardiness, very late arrivals, coming and going during class, etc. are disruptive behaviors that impede learning for not only that individual but also for all other members of the class. If disruptive behaviors arise, instructors will counsel students individually. If the problems continue, grades and/or credit may be reduced, or the student might be asked to withdraw from the class.

If extended absences occur due to illness or family travel, arrangements should be made with each class teacher (in advance when possible) to provide for compensating work. This may not be possible for some classes or some situations; decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

To receive a diploma from Wellsprings Friends School, a student must complete **24 credits**. Specific areas of study must include:

[LA]	Language Arts.....	4
[MA]*	Math.....	3
[SC]	Science.....	3
[SS]	Social Studies.....	3
[PE]	Physical Education.....	1
[HE]	Health.....	1
[AP/FA]	Applied & Fine Arts.....	3
[CB]*+[EL]	Community Building + Electives	6
	Total Credits	24

**All 3 math credits must be at the level of Algebra I and above.*

***The amount of required CB credit is 0.2 per term that the student attends Wellsprings.*

In addition, students are **required** by the Oregon Department of Education to demonstrate efficiency in certain **Essential Skills**. This requirement must be fulfilled in one of three ways: state test; work samples; or other approved standardized tests.

ACADEMIC SCHEDULING AND CREDITS

The school year consists of four terms of 9 weeks each. Credit is awarded at the end of each term. Credit is not 'all or nothing' but rather awarded proportionally to the student's attendance. In this way, the student's amount of participation is acknowledged, no matter what, a very helpful system for most students who come to Wellsprings. The drawback of our system, however, is that students who get some credit each term but consistently fail to achieve full credit, will find themselves 'surprised' in their senior year by how far behind they have fallen. So the amount of credit can become a concern, though more often it is the lack of credits in *specific areas* that becomes problematic.

Each student has an advisor (one of our fulltime teachers) who helps them register for appropriate classes each term and encourages them to earn adequate credit. But even excellent guidance can go only so far: it is up to the student to do the work to earn the needed credit.

Each term, a fulltime student normally enrolls in seven classes:

Regular M-Th morning classes:	3 (@ 0.3 credits each)
MW and TuTh block classes:	2 (@ 0.3 credits each)
Friday class:	1 (@ 0.15 credits)
Community Building class:	1 (@ 0.25 credits)
TOTAL CREDITS EXPECTED: 1.9 CREDITS	

Credits are earned primarily on the basis of attendance. Occasionally part of the credit for an individual class may be based on fulfillment of a major project. Grades reflect the quality and/or effort of the work performed during the term.

All students are automatically enrolled in Community Building every term. Not a "class" in the traditional sense, Community Building involves four elements of participation, as explained below. Some students need to be constantly reminded that *Community Building credit is a specific part of Graduation Requirements*.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

"Community Building" is a class unlike others, which carries 0.25 credits per term. You do not earn credit simply by hanging around school on Fridays. "*Community Building*" involves *genuine participation in daily life at Wellsprings*. It is an essential part of being a Wellsprings student, and making the school a comfortable and functional environment—for you, and for everyone here. Formal credit is based on the following criteria:

- Participation in Morning Circle
- Being present in Silent Meetings
- Participation in Community Meetings

- Participation in All-School activities

Grading is either “Pass” (P) or “No Basis” (NB), with credits calculated proportionally to attendance. **“Community Building” is required for graduation.** Because many students do not begin at Wellsprings in their freshman year, requiring a single fixed number of credits for everyone is inappropriate. Instead, the requirement is individually calculated, based on the expectation that you will earn an average of at least 0.2 credits per term in attendance, or in other words, at least 80% of the credit for Community Building that you could earn while enrolled in Wellsprings.

COMMUNITY MEETING

Once each term all students and staff gather for a Community Meeting, and at other times when needed. All members of the community are expected to attend. Students and staff are encouraged to bring items for discussion along with concerns and problems that may need to be addressed by the entire community, as well as joys and other sharing. All points of view will be heard and respected, with consensus being reached on any item that requires a decision.

SILENT MEETING

Once a week, the school community gathers for Silent Meeting, a practice of value for our daily lives and an ongoing connection with our Quaker heritage, as well as being rooted in many other traditions. As the whole group settles into a sustained period of silence, every person should seek to quiet the mind and body. This is a time for personal reflection, and community oneness.

During the silent meeting it is not appropriate to talk, whisper, touch others, pass notes, make noise, listen to headphones, read, share seats, leave the room, or in any way disturb the peaceful atmosphere. The silent meeting lasts fifteen minutes, and ends when the “leader” says “Good morning, friends” and everyone in the circle holds hands.

VISITOR POLICY

Persons visiting for a full day need to have the host student notify the office at least 24 hours in advance. Upon arrival, the guest should go to the office to check in. Student-hosted visitors not spending a full day with us may come only during the lunch period (12:15-1:00 p.m.). They should leave promptly at the end of lunch. If the visitor’s presence causes tensions or conflicts arise they will be restricted from further visits for a period of time to be determined on a case-by-case basis. Generally speaking, visitors are expected to come only on an infrequent basis.

VEHICLE SAFETY AND TRANSPORTATION

Cars must always be driven in a safe, responsible way. The speed limit on school property is 5 miles per hour and must be respected. Drivers should proceed cautiously, aware that there are frequently pedestrians and bicyclists in the driveway and those other vehicles may be discharging passengers. Visitors’ cars and delivery vehicles use the driveway and parking lot at times, and should be treated courteously.

The school provides transportation on field trips. Students may not take their own cars on any school trip. In special circumstances, the Head of School may grant permission but such a case would be a rare exception.

SEARCH AND SEIZURE POLICY

Wellsprings Friends School recognizes a student's right to privacy and to be free from unreasonable search and seizure. It is the expectation of WFS that students, staff and guests will not bring illegal or prohibited items to school with them. We will all work together to preserve the safety of students and staff and to maintain the integrity of the learning environment.

Should a student be observed or suspected to have an illegal or prohibited item in their possession, a Wellsprings staff member may ask the student to open and reveal the contents of their pockets, bags, backpacks, or cars and to surrender any illegal or prohibited items found. This will be done as privately as possible. In some cases, the surrendered items may be returned to the student at the end of the school day; other items may be turned over to parents. Prohibited items include: weapons, illegal drugs, drug paraphernalia, alcohol, tobacco products, pornography and pornographic paraphernalia.

Should a student refuse to comply with a request to open pockets, bags, or cars or to surrender restricted items, the student's parents will be contacted and the student will be sent home for the rest of the day. Before re-admittance, the student and parents must meet with school staff to discuss the incident and work together towards solving the problem.