

WHISPERING WINDS CHARTER SCHOOL

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Student and Parent Handbook and Contract

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PHILOSOPHY

Charter schools are publicly funded and to that extent they are public schools. Charter schools, however, are operated privately and have their own Board of Directors. Each charter school is different in their philosophy and mission.

Whispering Winds Charter School is built on the philosophy that every child can and will learn given the right program and environment. We offer a rigorous, progressive learning environment in a homelike atmosphere. We seek to find and build on every child's strengths.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY

As a public school, we are required to teach the Florida Common Core Standards. We use a variety of instructional methods. We emphasize building upon prior knowledge and whenever possible use "hands on" activities in small groups or individually.

We utilize computer technology to enhance the learning experience and to provide additional curriculum support.

We use an integrated curriculum whenever possible meshing the application of material across various settings and practical usage.

ADMISSIONS/ENROLLMENT

Students will be considered for admission without regard to race, religion, national origin, gender, or physical disability. Whispering Winds Charter School is open to any student in grades K-5 in Levy, Dixie or Gilchrist counties and any student receiving a waiver from the District to attend school in Levy County. Whispering Winds has an open admissions procedure, utilizing a "first come, first served" policy.

Pursuant to Section 1002.33(10)(d)(j), Florida Statutes, students may be withdrawn from Whispering Winds Charter School at any time to enroll in another public school as determined by Whispering Winds Charter School Board Policy. All students will be required to adhere to the School Board of Levy County and State of Florida policy regarding student health examinations and inoculations.

- 1) Children of faculty and staff members may be moved to the top of the list.

- 2) Children who have a sibling already attending may be moved to the top of the list.

The directors shall determine that students are needed in particular classes at the school. Applicants with registration forms on the current waiting list will be called to determine if they wish to enroll in the school.

The directors shall determine enrollment periods for each school year. During the summer, student vacancies will be filled for the Fall term.

All new students entering Whispering Winds Charter School will be put on a probationary status for nine weeks upon entering the school. This will allow time for the administration and staff to determine whether or not they will be able to meet the needs of the child and have the necessary support from parents.

Also, all students, parents, teachers and the Principal will be expected to sign a contract which will insure that everyone is working together for the good of each child.

Parents who have not had a child at Whispering Winds will be expected to attend an orientation meeting before the start of the school year.

EMERGENCY CARDS

All children must have an emergency card on file at all times. It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the school of changes of address, phone numbers, work phone numbers, etc.

PARENT AND STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Be an active part in your child's education. Assist with your child's homework and school projects and ensure they are completed in the given time frame.
- Ensure your child is on time and present in school each day, with the appropriate materials necessary to be a successful student. (e.g. pencil, pen, notebook paper, etc.)
- Call in each absence and/or tardy for your child.
- Ensure that your child gets enough sleep in the evening.
- Do not allow your child to come to school with toys, CD players, trading cards, mp3 players, or other electronic equipment or software unless pre-approved by the administration.
- Cell phones must be turned OFF and kept in the backpack during the school day.
- Your child must be picked up on time or you will be charged \$1.00 per minute for each minute after 15 minutes from the end of school.
- Participate in face-to-face meetings with teachers.

- Support administration staff when discipline is required.
- Complete required 20 hours of service to the school per year.
- Return documents that need signatures on time.
- Read and keep up to date on communication from the school.
- Report to the administration, teacher or school nurse designee any medication change which might change your child's behavior.
- Encourage your child to show respect for themselves and others.
- **IF YOU ARE CALLED TO PICK YOUR CHILD UP FOR HEALTH OR DISCIPLINARY REASONS, THERE IS NO OPTION. THE CHILD MUST BE PICKED UP. IF THE SCHOOL CALLS TO HAVE A CHILD REMOVED FROM SCHOOL FOR HEALTH OR DISCIPLINARY REASONS AND THE PARENTS REFUSES TO PICK UP THEIR CHILD, STATE AND/OR COUNTY AUTHORITIES WILL BE CALLED.**
- Please be courteous and respectful to others when you are on school grounds
- Profanity, obscene, offensive, or disrespectful language is never to be used on campus at any time by anyone.
- We are always happy to make an appointment with you at any time to discuss your child's progress, your concerns, issues that develop, etc. However, teachers cannot discuss your child in front of other children in the classroom.

TEACHER RESPONSIBILITIES

- Ensure each student a safe environment in which to learn and stretch abilities.
- Treat each child with respect and dignity.
- Be fair, not equal, because each child is different, to all students.
- Provide a quality education for each child according to each child's needs.

DIRECTORS RESPONSIBILITIES

- Administer the total education program of the school in conformity with its philosophy and goals
- Personnel decisions.

- Determine programs for the general improvement of the school
- Facilitate a safe learning environment and present the needs of the students.
- Work closely with teachers, students and parent organizations.
- Articulate school programs to parents.
- Support teachers in their effort to give a quality education to all students.
- Provide opportunities for professional development.
- Oversee school attendance, discipline and student activities.

PARENT VOLUNTEER HOURS AND RULES

Parents are required to volunteer 20 hours per family per year. If a child enrolls after the school year begins, the volunteer hours will be prorated to two hours.

The parent volunteer contract is enforceable under Florida law and failure to uphold or fulfill their responsibilities under that contract would be sufficient grounds for that charter school to deny admission for your child for the following school year.

What counts toward volunteer hours?

- SAC committee duties/meetings, General meetings, Board meeting, PTO meetings, classroom meetings, Board member meetings, working in the classroom, helping with classroom items at home (decodable books, book orders, etc.), helping in the office,

What does **not** count?

Reading to your child at night, helping your child with homework, or attendance or disciplinary meetings.

STUDENT DISCIPLINE

Parents and students shall sign a “compact of support” detailing the student’s, parents’, and school’s responsibilities in the education of the student. This agreement shall be binding on all signatories. This agreement shall be stored as an addendum to these policies. This must be signed and returned to the school.

We emphasize a discipline approach that encourages students to take responsibility for their own actions. There is a school-wide emphasis on academic excellence and sensitivity towards others. We will strive to create a community of learners that care about and respect one another. Therefore, students will be expected to treat teachers, aides, and peers with courtesy, respect, and kindness.

Aggression (verbal or physical) is never appropriate under any circumstance.

Each teacher will establish appropriate procedures for discipline in his/her classroom based on these guidelines. These are guidelines and do not represent every possible situation.

- Students are expected to show respect to all WWCS staff members and students.
 - Destruction of school property is a violation of the Anti-Bullying Florida Statutes. Any school property that is damaged by a student (not including normal wear and tear) will result in the replacement, repair or payment for damages by the student's parents. Placing stickers or writing on school property is not acceptable.
 - No toys, electronic devices, skateboards, weapons, or any other personal item, other than those needed for school work, are permitted at school.
 - No items with offensive pictures, slogans, vulgar images or words, or profanity.
 - No profane, abusive or slang language is to be used.
-

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Pursuant to Florida Statutes Section 1006.147, Bullying and harassment is strictly prohibited.

This section may be cited as the "Jeffrey Johnston Stand Up for All Students Act."

- (1) Bullying or harassment of any student or school employee of a public K-12 educational institution is prohibited:
 - (a) During any education program or activity conducted by a public K-12 educational institution;
 - (b) During any school-related or school-sponsored program or activity or on a school bus of a public K-12 educational institution; or
 - (c) Through the use of data or computer software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, or computer network of a public K-12 educational institution.
- (3) For purposes of this section:
 - (a) "Bullying" means systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students and may involve:
 1. Teasing;
 2. Social exclusion;
 3. Threat;
 4. Intimidation;
 5. Stalking;
 6. Physical violence;
 7. Theft;
 8. Sexual or racial harassment;
 9. Public humiliation; or

10. Destruction of property.

(b) "Harassment" means any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, use of data or computer software, or written, verbal, or physical conduct directed against a student or school employee that:

1. Places a student or school employee in reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property;
2. Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities, or benefits; or
3. Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of a school.

The definitions of "bullying" and "harassment" include:

1. Retaliation against a student or school employee by another student or school employee for asserting or alleging an act of bullying or harassment. Reporting an act of bullying or harassment that is not made in good faith is considered retaliation.
2. Perpetuation of conduct listed in paragraph (a) or paragraph (b) by an individual or group with intent to demean, dehumanize, embarrass, or cause physical harm to a student or school employee, by:
 - a. Incitement or coercion;
 - b. Accessing or knowingly causing or providing access to data or computer software through a computer, computer system, or computer network within the scope of the district school system; or
 - c. Acting in a manner that has an effect substantially similar to the effect of bullying or harassment.

Low Level Disciplinary Offenses

Classroom rules and expectations are determined within each class. When these expectations are not met and rules are broken, the teacher handles these issues. The Administration becomes involved when low level offenses become repeated behaviors.

High Level Offenses

For offenses that involve violence, blatant or repeated disrespect, defiance or argumentativeness, weapons, theft, cheating, violations of the bullying policy, or repeated lower level offenses administrators will be notified. A discipline referral will be written by a school adult. The Administration will assign appropriate consequences up to and including possible dismissal from the school.

School Board of Levy County Student Code of Conduct

All students will be given a copy of the School Board of Levy County Student Code of Conduct. Students are expected to comply with the SBLC Student Code of Conduct. Whispering Winds may not use all of

the same consequences as the District, but most of Levy County's Student Code of Conduct are applicable.

Students riding the Levy County school buses must comply with rules for behavior according to the Levy County School Code of Student Conduct.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

ABSENCES AND TARDIES

Florida School Law, Chapter 232, requires regular school attendance up to the age of 16. Students are expected to be on time for class each day. Attendance is taken at 8:00 a.m. Parents are required to notify the school by phone or in writing as soon as it is known a child will be absent.

Students with excessive absences or tardies will be subject to the following:

- After the 5th absence, a notification will be sent or phone call home made
- After the 10th absence, per semester, a notification will be sent home and a parent conference must be held.
- Parent and student may be required to go before the Whispering Winds Board of Directors to determine future placement at the school. This action may result in dismissal from Whispering Winds Charter School.

NOTE: 15 or more absences, tardies, or combination thereof, may result in dismissal or failure to re-enroll the next school year, from Whispering Winds Charter School.

MAKE-UP WORK

- Students are responsible for all work missed while they were absent.
- Each teacher will decide what is an appropriate length of time for make-up work on a case-by-case basis.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

DROP-OFF

Drop off time is from 7:30 a.m. to 7:55 a.m. We do not have staff to supervise children prior to 7:30 a.m. Please do not drop your child off prior to that time.

All children are to be dropped off at the loop on the North side of the campus (the last driveway towards Fanning). The gates are locked at 8:00 am. Any child arriving late must be checked in by the parent in the office. Do not drop off or park in the loop by the office as this is the bus loop.

PICK-UP

Pick-up time is 2:25p.m. Gates will open at 2:15 pm

CHILDREN WHO ARE NOT PICKED UP by 2:35 P.M. WILL BE SENT TO AFTER SCHOOL AND THERE WILL BE A CHARGE OF \$12.

CHANGES IN PICK-UP/BUS RIDER STATUS

Any changes in who picks up your child, or bus changes must be done in writing. A child will not be released to anyone who is not on the emergency card without written permission from the parent, and we will ask for photo identification.

In the event of an emergency, a phone call may be accepted, in lieu of written permission. However, emergencies should not be frequent events.

SEVERE WEATHER INFORMATION

Whispering Winds Charter School will follow the same instructions as the School Board of Levy County in case of severe weather emergencies. Parents should watch the local news for information about school closings. There may be times when the principal may authorize a day or a portion of the day that is not authorized by the School Board of Levy County. In that instance, you will be contacted by Whispering Winds.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

If a parent feels they have a grievance or complaint, they should follow the following procedures.

1. Seek to resolve the problem with the teacher first.
2. If you are not satisfied with the result, meet with the principal.
3. If still not satisfied, contact the Whispering Winds Board of Directors. The current list of the Whispering Winds Board of Directors is posted in the front office and is also on our website at www.whisperingwindscharter.com.

Parties

Birthday parties for individual students are not allowed. If you would like to bring in a special snack for your child and their class on their birthday that is permissible. Please no extended parties.

Playground Safety

The playground areas of Whispering Winds are unsupervised before and after school. Children are not allowed to play in playground areas unsupervised.

VISITORS ON CAMPUS

All parents, guardians, or visitors must report to the office first and get a visitor/volunteer badge. If you have not been fingerprinted, you cannot be with children without a Whispering Winds employee present. You will need to sign out when you leave campus.

UNIFORM POLICY

- All students **MUST** wear school uniforms as a condition of enrollment at Whispering Winds Charter School.

Shirts/ Pants/ Shorts/ Jumpers/Skorts

- Any **SOLID** color polo, or oxford button-up shirt, short or long sleeved shirt may be worn.
- Navy, Khaki (tan), black, blue, grey, brown bottoms or jumpers may be worn.

Hats or Head Covering

- Hats and head coverings are not to be worn unless approved by administration.

Shoes

- Closed toe shoes suitable for participation in physical education and recess must be worn.

Clothes Closet

Whispering Winds has a clothes closet. We accept used uniforms that are clean and in good repair to offer for free to families.

HEALTH POLICY

If a student is too ill to remain in class, he/she must request permission from his/her teacher to report to the office. If the child is running a fever, or is throwing up, the parent or guardian shall be contacted to pick the child up. The parent will be contacted in case of any serious injury or illness.

MEDICATION POLICY

Only prescription medication shall be administered at school by the school nurse designee. Over-the-counter medications must be accompanied by orders from a parent/physician. All medications must be brought to the school by a parent or guardian. No child should bring medication to school. **NO** student is permitted to self-administer medication at any time.

A separate supply of medication must be kept at school. Medication shall not be transported between home and school on a daily or weekly basis. The medication label must indicate the student's name, name of medication, physician's name, dosage, and time (frequency).

If medication requires equipment for administration (cup, spoon, dropper), the parent is responsible for supplying the articles labeled with the student's name.

New parental authorization forms may be requested periodically.

When medication is discontinued or the end of the school year arrives, medication not taken home by the parent shall be destroyed.

MEDICAL EXCUSES FROM PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Students must have a note to be excused from P.E. due to a medical reason. If the student needs to be excused for an extended period of time a doctor's note will be required.

PEDICULOSIS (HEAD LICE)

Students will be checked periodically for head lice. ALL children who have nits or lice must be sent home. We cannot put a child on the bus if lice or nits have been found. A parent or person authorized to pick up the child must come to pick the child up from school. Students MAY NOT return to school until treatment has been administered and all nits have been removed from the hair. The School Board of Levy County has a "no nit" policy.

WWCS TOBACCO FREE CAMPUS POLICY

WWCS is a tobacco free campus. The board has a legal authority and obligation pursuant to the federal *Pro-Children's Act, Title X of Public Law 103-227, Florida Statutes 381.84* and the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

TOBACCO USE PROHIBITED

NO STUDENT, STAFF MEMBER OR SCHOOL VISITOR IS PERMITTED TO USE ANY TOBACCO PRODUCT AT ANY TIME, ON SCHOOL GROUNDS, OR WHEN ATTENDING SCHOOL FUNCTIONS WHERE STUDENTS ARE PRESENT.

Wellness Policy

As Whispering Winds is a Public Charter School we must adhere to a wellness policy as all public schools do. Please try to make all snacks and lunches brought from home as healthy as possible. School breakfasts and lunches are made according to state guidelines on nutrition. If you would like to see Whispering Winds Wellness policy you can find it on our website or obtain a copy from the front office.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT

Students are assessed during the first six weeks of school to establish a baseline to assess academic growth throughout the year. They are assessed throughout the year to monitor progress. Whispering Winds is a public charter school therefore we participate in all state mandated testing.

REPORT CARDS

Report cards will be issued quarterly. Progress reports will be sent out in the middle of each grading period.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT POLICY (TITLE I)

Whispering Winds Charter School is committed to providing a quality education for every child in the school. When schools and parents form strong partnerships, children's potential for academic success improves significantly.

Whispering Winds Charter School wishes to invite parents to become more involved in the development of school review and improvement.

- Title I Parent Advisory/Title I parents will serve on the planning committees for Title I plan and the School Improvement Plan.
- A minimum of two meetings will be held to provide Title I parents with the opportunity for input into the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the Title I program.

Whispering Winds Charter School will provide technical assistance and support to the parents in the planning and implementing effective involvement activities.

- Actively support, and promote efforts that increase the level and quality of parent involvement
- Provide parents and staff information, materials, and training on required and effective parent involvement policies and practices.

- Provide the best practices, ideas, materials, new approaches, research, and other program information in order for WWCS to improve its parent involvement programs.
- Research and model effective parent involvement activities and practices.
- Provide resource materials for parent meetings, workshops, and take home learning activities.
- Collaborate with the PTO, School Advisory Council, community agencies, and businesses to provide activities that build capacity for parents to assist learning and participate in school processes such as parent workshops or family unity activities.

Whispering Winds Charter School wishes to assist parents' in the strengthening of their involvement by following programs to strengthen the school/family partnership by providing materials and training for school staff and parents.

- Educate school staff and parents in the value of their contributions and how to reach out to communicate with and work out with parents as equal partners to implement and coordinate parent programs and to build ties between parents and the school.
- Provide training the parents in understanding topics such as academic standards and how to help their children meet academic standards by monitoring their progress and literacy skills.
- Provide information for parents in understanding state and academic content and performance standards, state and local assessment requirements of Title I and how parents can assist in their child's education.
- Whispering Winds Charter School will ensure Title I parents with limited English proficiency or literacy difficulties the same opportunities as other parents. These opportunities may be structured, adapted, or modified so that the parents may receive the same accessibility to the materials.
- WWCS will provide information to parents about the Parent Resource Center located in the lobby of the main office.

WWCS will coordinate Title I parent involvement activities with other parental involvement activities, including collaboration with the local community college, as well as State and District initiatives.

- Conduct an annual meeting in the Fall and Spring for Title I parents to evaluate the content and effectiveness of the Title I Parent Involvement Plan, procedures and policies and use the evaluation to identify successful parent involvement strategies to improve parent involvement.

Parents will have input into the funding for parent involvement through the school and District planning process.

SCHOOL, PARENT, STUDENT, COMPACT

In compliance with Federal Title I regulations, every student has on file a compact, signed by the student, parent, and teacher/administrator. This compact will be a “contract” between the parent, school, and student that will explain what is expected from the student, the parent, and teacher/administration.

FIELD TRIP POLICY

Whenever possible, the school will provide transportation using the school vans and teacher vehicles. If there are not enough spaces, parents may be asked to drive and transport their own child. In order to transport other children, parents would have to be fingerprinted, show proof of insurance, and have a vehicle meeting safety criteria guidelines if the child’s parent is not riding as well. In the event parents drive or chaperone:

The vehicle must be a passenger car or multipurpose passenger vehicle or truck, as defined in Title 49, C.F.R., part 571, designed to transport fewer than 10 students. Students must be transported in designated seating positions and must use the occupant crash protection provided by the manufacturer unless the student’s physical condition prohibits such use.

The Directors must approve all chaperones. Additional members of the chaperone’s family who wish to attend must be approved by the directors.

Chaperones should model appropriate behavior at all times.

Chaperones need to plan to stay with planned activity schedule and with their group for the duration of the field trip.

All students have to fill out a form and have it notarized before any student can go on a field trip in or out of county. You will receive this form at the beginning of the year. No student will be allowed to participate in a field trip without this form on file in the office. Before each field trip you also need to complete and sign a permission slip. (this does not have to be notarized).

NON-DISCRIMINATION

No person shall, on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, marital status, disability, age, religion, or on the basis of the use of language other than English by Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity, or in any employment conditions or practices conducted by this school, except as provided by law.

The School will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). This law makes it unlawful to discriminate against a qualified individual with a disability who can perform the essential functions of his/her job with reasonable accommodations.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Whispering Winds Charter School does NOT provide student transportation. Children residing in the Chiefland area may ride the Levy County school bus. Children riding the Levy County school bus must follow all rules and procedures of Levy County while on the bus, at the bus stops, and during bus transitions. Riding the bus is a privilege and children who do not follow the rules may be suspended from the bus by the bus driver or from the authorities at transition locations. If your child does not ride the bus, you are responsible for your child getting to school.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), schools may disclose, without consent, directory information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must NOTIFY parents and eligible students of their rights to not allow the school to disclose directory information about them. If you do not want your child's basic information disclosed during an emergency situation, please write a letter and send to the office. (Source: <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>)

Please Sign and Return

If you have more than one child attending WWCS please list all attending. You only need to return one form.

The parent(s)/ guardian of _____ have read and agree to abide by the codes of conduct stated in this parent/student handbook. This includes but is not limited to Whispering Wind's parent involvement policy, the wellness policy, discipline policy, bullying policy, and dress code policy.

I(we) understand that by not fulfilling my contractual obligations to the school and to my child, this will result in my child being suspended or dismissed and referred to a regular Public School or a private school of the parent's choice as approved by the Whispering Winds Board of Directors.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Acknowledged by: _____ Date: _____