

Willits Elementary Charter School Parent / Student Handbook

WECS Mission & Vision

Our mission is to equip elementary students with the academic and social skills needed to become self-motivated, competent, life-long learners and productive citizens who respect themselves, others, community, diversity, and the environment. Willits Elementary Charter School will promote growth and development by providing all students with a safe and nurturing, educational environment.

We aim to instill a love of learning and provide our students with a solid academic foundation by:

- Involving families
- Emphasizing inquiry based education
- Encouraging creative thinking
- Incorporating problem solving on a regular basis
- Offering small class sizes and individualized attention
- Providing opportunities for all students to excel
- Presenting a well-rounded curriculum which includes foreign language instruction (Spanish), arts, music, physical activity, and outdoor education
- Utilizing varied forms of instruction
- Promoting self awareness, interpersonal communication, and active listening
- Presenting a global perspective of human society
- Creating opportunities for students to develop an awareness of society's impact on the natural environment

WECS is an intentionally small, independent charter school serving grades K through 5. Like all charter schools, we are open to all who wish to attend, we do not charge tuition, teach religious doctrine, or discriminate in admissions policies. Our curriculum aligns with the California State Standards and Common Core standards and students will participate in annual standardized tests.

Governance

The Charter School Association of Willits Board of Directors determines the general policies of the school, conducts long term strategic planning, ensures that the school achieves its educational and financial goals, and governs WECS. The Board is composed of 5-11 members representing both parents and the community at large.

Regular meetings of the Charter Board of Directors occur on the first Tuesday of each month, at the Willits Charter School (serving grades 6-12) at 14315 S. Main St., at 4:00 p.m. during the school year (summer meeting times are subject change) to discuss policy and procedural matters relevant to the school. These meetings are open to the public and the agenda is posted in front of the school at least 72

hours in advance. Parents may submit agenda items for discussion to the director of the school or any board member. The director/principal implements the policies of the Board and oversees the day-to-day operations of the school.

Student Attendance

Attendance

WECS parents/guardians agree to support the school by ensuring that their children are in school every day unless they are sick or have an unavoidable emergency. This is the single most important thing you can do to support your child academically and the school financially. Our fiscal survival is dependent upon good attendance; attending school regularly is a key component of academic success.

Absence

WECS students need to attend school and every class every day unless they are sick or there is an unavoidable emergency. ***If your child has had a fever or vomited in the last 24 hours, please keep them home. In the event of illness or an unavoidable emergency, parents must notify WECS before 9 a.m.*** You may leave a message on the answering machine if it is before school hours.

Valid reasons for absence from school (Excused Absences)

1. Illness: A signed medical excuse is required if a student accumulates four days of illness within the school month.
2. Medical or dental appointments: Parents should schedule appointments to allow optimal access to curriculum. Doctor verification may be required if appointments interfere with school success.
3. Family emergencies and justifiable personal reasons (including participation in religious instruction or exercises): **Absences must be approved by the WECS Director or the Lead Teacher.**

Please inform the WECS Director in writing prior to absences relating to religious activities.

It is the parents' legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school. When a student is truant, a student attendance review meeting will be called to address attendance issues. Parents, teachers, and the Director will discuss possible interventions and create an attendance agreement. Families who fail to comply with the attendance agreement drafted at this meeting may be referred to the District Attorney's office for truancy (Ed. Code 48320, 48321, and 48323).

WECS does not receive any funding for a student on any day that s/he does not come to school; however, we do receive funding if a student comes to school for even a portion of the day. Please keep this in mind when you are scheduling medical appointments and arrange for your child to attend at least part of the school day.

Leaving School Early

In the case of illness or a family emergency, students will only be released to a parent/guardian or to the care of an adult whose name appears on the child's emergency card on file in the school office.

Missed Work Due to Excused Absences

It is the responsibility of the student to take care of missed work when s/he returns to school. For absences of 3 or more days, homework can be provided, or Short Term Independent Study can be arranged (see below).

Short Term Independent Study (MIS)

If it is known ahead of time that a student will be absent from school for three days or longer, parents should request a program of Short Term Independent Study at least one week in advance of the absence. This enables the student to receive assignments for the period s/he will be gone and to receive credit for the work. It also enables the school to receive funding for the days the student is absent. This work is due the day the student returns to school. Attendance is determined by work completed. Students who do not return MIS assignments are not guaranteed the opportunity to participate in MIS in the future. All requests for MIS must be approved by the MIS Coordinator.

Parent Participation

Our school was founded on the principle of family involvement, which benefits both the school and our students. By giving time and effort to the school, parents/guardians show that they value education, which encourages students to value it as well. Parent presence also helps many students feel more comfortable at school and gives families a chance to be active in their children's academic life. We depend upon the help of parents/guardians in practical ways: as groundskeepers, repair persons, classroom aides, tutors, event organizers, fundraising support, drivers for field trips, maintenance etc. WECS recognizes that parents are a student's first teacher and play a vital role in their child's educational progress. It is with this understanding that WECS parents are encouraged to volunteer.

WECS understands that special circumstances may prevent some families from volunteering their time. No consequences regarding a student's enrollment or participation in school programs will occur if parent participation hours are not performed. No student shall be dis-enrolled from WECS due to a parent or guardian's failure to contribute volunteer service hours.

General Information

Contact Numbers

It is extremely important for us to be able to reach you in case of emergency or if we have a question about your child! Please be sure that we have correct contact numbers and emergency information, including home phone, work phone(s), cell phone, mailing address, email, names and numbers of emergency contacts, etc. **Please notify us immediately if any of these numbers should change.**

Daily Schedule

Before School Program/ Breakfast Program begins: 7:45 a.m.

Classes begin: 8:30

Pick-up: 3:30

After School Program ends: 5:45

Pick Up and Drop Off

In the mornings, please keep the west side of Lenore Street clear as a drop off zone. If dropping off, please pull forward, stay in the driver's seat and a school employee will assist your child in and out of the car if needed. In the afternoons, please park to pick up your child. To ensure student safety, always use the crosswalk when crossing the street. If students will be walking home, a written request is required.

Electronics Policy

Students may not use personal electronic devices (cell phones, iPads, iPods, etc.) on campus. Parents, please be assured that if you need to contact your student, the office staff is available and willing to get a message to your student. There is a phone in the office for student use. If for some reason it is essential that your child have a cell phone or other personal device, please contact your child's teacher or the school office to make special arrangements.

Enrollment

Admission to WECS is open to any resident of the state of California. We do not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation or disability. We do not charge tuition or conduct sectarian programs, admissions policies or employment practices. We hold a series of open enrollment periods every spring for the following school year; the open enrollment period ends April 30.

The process is as follows:

- The school sets limits on each grade level for the following year;
- Students and parents in the community are informed of enrollment periods;
- Information about enrollment is given in school newsletters and on our website;
- The number of returning students is determined;
- The number of openings per class is determined;
- Priority is given to returning current students, current student's siblings, and children of staff and board members;
- Remaining openings will be filled from the applicant list. If there are more applicants than openings, all applicants' names will be entered into a random lottery, conducted with impartial observers.
- Lottery picks will be numbered and spaces filled according to lottery number. The waiting list will follow from lottery placement numbers.

Details on the lottery and placement system may be found in the WECS Charter.

Field Trips

Any student going on a school-sponsored field trip must have a permission slip signed by the parent/guardian. A student may be excluded from participating in a field trip if, based on behavior concerns or academic performance, the teacher or administrators feel the student's behavior may interfere with the ability of others to have a safe, enjoyable, educational experience.

We are so appreciative of our volunteers who chaperone field trips. Unfortunately, siblings are not permitted to attend field trips for a variety of reasons, including legal ones. Our insurance covers only WECS staff, designated chaperones, and students enrolled in the grade or class taking the trip.

Volunteer drivers transporting students for field trips should be aware that their personal insurance is the primary coverage. We require that drivers have coverage of at least \$100,000/\$300,000 per occurrence. In addition, drivers may only carry the number of passengers for which their vehicle was designed and must have functioning seat belts. Before the trip, drivers will be asked to fill out an owner/driver information form and submit proof of insurance and automobile registration.

Food Service

WECS provides breakfast and lunch. Lunch costs \$2.75 and brunch cost \$1.50. Reduced price brunch is \$0.30 and reduced price lunch is \$0.40. We participate in the national school lunch and breakfast programs. We offer both free or reduced price lunch and brunch to students whose families qualify for the federal lunch program. Yearly forms are required to verify qualification for this program. Please send a check at the beginning of each month in the parent/teacher communication folder. We will send monthly updates to let you know what the balance is on your child's account.

No-Sugar Policy

WECS parents requested that WECS become a “no-sugar” campus. Please pack healthy food and save desserts for home. Check the ingredients on packaged foods to see if sugar or artificial sweeteners are listed. If so, please do not send to school. Let the front office know if you would like a list of healthy lunch ideas. The internet and your fellow parents have great ideas for all-natural, sugar-free birthday treats.

Immunizations

Please check with your physician to make sure your child is current on their immunizations. All public schools in California require proof of immunizations before enrollment. In rare circumstances, a permanent medical exemption may be allowed. Please see www.shotsforschool.org for more details.

Medications

All prescription and other non-prescription medications to be administered by school staff, including inhalers, must be in their original containers with the student’s name clearly written on the container and must be accompanied by written instructions from the doctor detailing method, amount, and time schedule for use of the medication. We will not dispense over-the-counter pain relievers (aspirin, ibuprofen, acetaminophen) without the expressed permission of the parent/guardian. Students may not be in possession of any drugs while on school campus.

Special Education Services

WECS contracts with the Willits Unified School District for the provision of special education services for students with identified learning disabilities or other special needs.

Textbooks and School Supplies

Students are responsible for the textbooks and instruments issued to them and will be charged for misuse or loss of books or instruments. When books or instruments are issued, students will sign for them, noting current condition, so that they will not be charged for prior damage.

Transportation

Unfortunately, we cannot offer busing to students. A bike rack is provided for students who ride bikes to school. California law requires all minors to wear a helmet while riding a bike, scooter, or skateboard. To comply with the California Helmet Law and reduce the number of bicycle-related head injuries, all students are required to wear a helmet while riding to and from school.

Visitors

All visitors, including parent volunteers and visiting Independent Study students, must sign in and out at the school office.

Withdrawals

A parent/guardian must initiate the withdrawal process. Textbooks must be returned and any charges for lost or damaged books and lunch charges must be paid before transcripts and other student records will be forwarded to the new school.

Academic Program

Grades

WECS teachers will send home a student report card three per year, at the end of each trimester. Teachers assess student performance by evaluating a variety of assignments, including classwork, homework, tests, quizzes, papers, projects, and class participation.

Homework

Teachers at WECS assign homework that reinforces learning and helps students develop their skills. Time spent on homework will vary according to the student's grade level, ability and the difficulty of the assignments. If you have any concerns about your child's homework, please contact your child's teacher; modifications may be possible.

Independent Study Program

Independent Study Program is an alternative instructional program designed to individualize an educational plan for students outside the regular classroom.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

We conduct parent-teacher conferences periodically to support academic achievement and address behavior issues. Parents or teachers may also request a conference at any time.

Standardized Testing

WECS administers annual SBAC testing to grades 3, 4 and 5. Our school adheres to Common Core standards.

As a publicly funded charter school, we are required to participate in SBAC testing and SBAC scores are the primary measurements used to assess our performance for charter renewals. It is extremely important for all our students to participate in the SBAC program and put forth their best effort. Grade 5 students participate in the CST (California Science Test). Please ensure that your child is in school during the

week of SBAC testing (held in the spring). We are accountable to the state for a high (95%) participation rate.

Parents have a right to “opt-out” of these tests. If a family chooses to have their child “opt-out,” please submit a written request to the school director before testing begins.

Students with IEPs may be eligible to take CSTs with accommodations or modifications. Other students may qualify to take the California Modified Assessment (CMA) tests. Students with significant cognitive disabilities may take the California Alternative Performance Assessment (CAPA).

Students who are English learners take the CSTs in the language of English. However, students receiving instruction in Spanish, or students who have been enrolled in the United States for less than twelve months, may take the CSTs in their native language.

Student Study Teams

A Student Study Team (SST) meeting may be arranged at any time to discuss special problems a student may be having and to create an action plan to support the student at school and at home. The SST team includes parents/guardians, the student, director and core curriculum teachers.

WECS Expectations and Procedures

School-Wide Expectations

- **Be Safe**
- **Be Respectful**
- **Be Kind**
- **Do your Best**

Walkways

- Always **walk** for your safety and others
- Be aware of your surroundings
- Use low voices when passing
- Respect others’ personal space
- Stay on designated walkways

Cafeteria/MPR Room

- Leave the area clean
- Keep appropriate noise level
- Walk only
- Wait in line nicely
- Share your space but not your lunch
- Follow lunchtime and library procedures

Bathroom

- Respect privacy
- Leave the bathroom clean
- **Always** flush the toilet and wash your hands
- Finish your task and go back to class

Play Yard

- Listen and stay in sight
- Stay in safe areas
- Watch for outside dangers
- Pick up and put away equipment
- Keep play yard tidy
- Share the playground

Core Beliefs that Guide Enforcement of School Rules and Expectations

Each student is a unique individual with distinct personal, social and educational needs. As a result, every disciplinary situation is unique in nature. Consequences for misbehavior provide the best learning value when matched to the particular student and the specific situation. Students are more likely to learn from their mistakes when they see a reasonable connection between their behavior and the resulting consequences.

All members of the school community must behave responsibly, respectfully, and safely at all times and in all situations.

Responsible, respectful and safe behavior **excludes**:

- Threats, intimidation, bullying, harassment or serious verbal confrontation
- Intentional harm to the school or others
- Possession or use of drugs, alcohol or tobacco.
- Use of offensive language or profanity
- Defacing school property; graffiti.
- Major class disruptions, defiance of authority, willful disregard of school rules, or disrupting school activities
- Theft (includes personal or school property)
- Possession of any weapon on campus, including knives of any length
- Riding bikes, skateboards or rollerblades on school grounds
- Fighting or horseplay (kicking, slapping, pushing or shoving)
- Cutting school, cutting class, or leaving campus without permission
- Sexual Harassment (as defined by California Ed. Code 212.5)

Dispute Resolution

It is expected that school staff, parents, and students work together to address and solve any issues that arise. Please use the following guidelines to resolve any conflicts that may occur.

- First and best: direct communication. Always try to solve your conflict with the person(s) most directly involved. If the problem is between a student and a teacher, the student is always encouraged to first speak to the teacher directly. If the problem is between a parent and a school staff member, they should attempt to discuss the matter in a friendly way with the person concerned. The great majority of problems can be solved by honest, respectful communication.
- If there is a conflict between students that direct discussion cannot resolve, the students should seek out a responsible peer, teacher or administrator to help mediate the dispute.
- If the conflict involves a staff member and direct communication cannot resolve it, the concerned party should contact the director to help resolve the conflict.
- If there is a conflict that involves the director, the concerned party should contact the president of the Charter Board of Directors, or any other Board member, for assistance. All staff, students, parents and Board members should always attempt to solve disputes internally. Please recognize that Willits Elementary Charter School is an independent charter school and is not a part of the Willits Unified School District.

Suspensions/Expulsions

Suspensions:

We follow the suspension policies of the California Education Code (Section 48900 A-P, 48901) and we follow the same procedures for suspension/expulsion as Willits Unified School District. Causes for suspension include, but are not limited to: possession of weapons or drugs at school, causing physical injury, robbery, damage to school property, habitual profanity, sexual harassment, defiance of staff or disruption of school activities, acts or threats of hate or violence. The length of a suspension will be determined by the administration, based on the specific circumstances and the student's past behavior record.

Expulsions:

We follow the Expulsion Policies of the California Education Code (Section 48915a).

Education Code 48900(a)-(r)

A pupil shall not be suspended from school or recommended for expulsion, unless the superintendent or the principal of the school in which the pupil is enrolled determines that the pupil has committed an act as defined pursuant to any of subdivisions (a) to (r), inclusive:

(a) (1) Caused, attempted to cause, or threatened to cause physical injury to another person.

(2) Willfully used force or violence upon the person of another, except in self-defense.

(b) Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished a firearm, knife, explosive, or other dangerous object, unless, in the case of possession of an object of this type, the pupil had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, which is concurred in by the principal or the designee of the principal.

(c) Unlawfully possessed, used, sold, or otherwise furnished, or been under the influence of, a controlled substance listed in Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 11053) of Division 10 of the Health and Safety Code, an alcoholic beverage, or an intoxicant of any kind.

- (d) *Unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell a controlled substance listed in Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 11053) of Division 10 of the Health and Safety Code, an alcoholic beverage, or an intoxicant of any kind, and either sold, delivered, or otherwise furnished to a person another liquid, substance, or material and represented the liquid, substance, or material as a controlled substance, alcoholic beverage, or intoxicant.*
- (e) *Committed or attempted to commit robbery or extortion.*
- (f) *Caused or attempted to cause damage to school property or private property.*
- (g) *Stolen or attempted to steal school property or private property.*
- (h) *Possessed or used tobacco, or products containing tobacco or nicotine products, including, but not limited to, cigarettes, cigars, miniature cigars, clove cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chew packets, and betel. However, this section does not prohibit use or possession by a pupil of his or her own prescription products.*
- (i) *Committed an obscene act or engaged in habitual profanity or vulgarity.*
- (j) *Unlawfully possessed or unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell drug paraphernalia, as defined in Section 11014.5 of the Health and Safety Code.*
- (k) *Disrupted school activities or otherwise willfully defied the valid authority of supervisors, teachers, administrators, school officials, or other school personnel engaged in the performance of their duties.*
- (l) *Knowingly received stolen school property or private property.*
- (m) *Possessed an imitation firearm. As used in this section, "imitation firearm" means replica of a firearm that is so substantially similar in physical properties to an existing firearm as to lead a reasonable person to conclude that the replica is a firearm.*
- (n) *Committed or attempted to commit a sexual assault as defined in Section 261, 266c, 286, 288, 288a, or 289 of the Penal Code or committed a sexual battery as defined in Section 243.4 of the Penal Code.*
- (o) *Harassed, threatened, or intimidated a pupil who is a complaining witness or a witness in a school disciplinary proceeding for the purpose of either preventing that pupil from being a witness or retaliating against that pupil for being a witness, or both.*
- (p) *Unlawfully offered, arranged to sell, negotiated to sell, or sold the prescription drug Soma.*
- (q) *Engaged in, or attempted to engage in, hazing. For purposes of this subdivision, "hazing" means a method of initiation or pre-initiation into a pupil organization or body, whether or not the organization or body is officially recognized by an educational institution, which is likely to cause serious bodily injury or personal degradation or disgrace resulting in physical or mental harm to a former, current, or prospective pupil. For purposes of this subdivision, "hazing" does not include athletic events or school sanctioned events.*
- (r) *Engaged in an act of bullying, including, but not limited to, bullying committed by means of an electronic act, as defined in subdivisions (f) and (g) of Section 32261, directed specifically toward a pupil or school personnel.*

Education Code 48900.2.

In addition to the reasons specified in Section 48900, a pupil may be suspended from school or recommended for expulsion if the superintendent or the principal of the school in which the pupil is enrolled determines that the pupil has committed sexual harassment as defined in Section 212.5.

For the purposes of this chapter, the conduct described in Section 212.5 must be considered by a reasonable person of the same gender as the victim to be sufficiently severe or pervasive to have a negative impact upon the individual's academic performance or to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment. This section shall not apply to pupils enrolled in kindergarten and grades 1 to 3, inclusive.

Education Code 48900.3

In addition to the reasons set forth in Sections 48900 and 48900.2, a pupil in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive, may be suspended from school or recommended for expulsion if the superintendent or the principal of the school in which the pupil is enrolled determines that the pupil has caused, attempted to cause, threatened to cause, or participated in an act of, hate violence, as defined in subdivision (e) of Section 233.

Education Code 48900.4

In addition to the grounds specified in Sections 48900 and 48900.2, a pupil enrolled in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive, may be suspended from school or recommended for expulsion if the superintendent or the principal of the school in which the pupil is enrolled determines that the pupil has intentionally engaged in harassment, threats, or intimidation, directed against school district personnel or pupils, that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to have the actual and reasonably expected effect of materially disrupting classwork, creating substantial disorder, and invading the rights of either school personnel or pupils by creating an intimidating or hostile educational environment.

Education Code 48900.7

a) In addition to the reasons specified in Sections 48900, 48900.2, 48900.3, and 48900.4, a pupil may be suspended from school or recommended for expulsion if the superintendent or the principal of the school in which the pupil is enrolled determines that the pupil has made terroristic threats against school officials or school property, or both.

b) For the purposes of this section, "terroristic threat" shall include any statement, whether written or oral, by a person who willfully threatens to commit a crime which will result in death, great bodily injury to another person, or property damage in excess of one thousand dollars (\$1,000), with the specific intent that the statement is to be taken as a threat, even if there is no intent of actually carrying it out, which, on its face and under the circumstances in which it is made, is so unequivocal, unconditional, immediate, and specific as to convey to the person threatened, a gravity of purpose and an immediate prospect of execution of the threat, and thereby causes that person reasonably to be in sustained fear for his or her own safety or for his or her immediate family's safety, or for the protection of school district property, or the personal property of the person threatened or his or her immediate family.

Education Code 48915 (a) and (c)

(a) Except as provided in subdivisions (c) and (e), the principal or the superintendent of schools shall recommend the expulsion of a pupil for any of the following acts committed at school or at a school activity off school grounds, unless the principal or superintendent finds that expulsion is inappropriate, due to the particular circumstance:

- 1. Causing serious physical injury to another person, except in self-defense.*

2. *Possession of any knife or other dangerous object of no reasonable use to the pupil.*
3. *Unlawful possession of any controlled substance listed in Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 11053) of Division 10 of the Health and Safety Code, except for the first offense for the possession of not more than one avoirdupois ounce of marijuana, other than concentrated cannabis.*
4. *Robbery or extortion.*
5. *Assault or battery, as defined in Sections 240 and 242 of the Penal Code, upon any school employee.*

(c) The principal or superintendent of schools shall immediately suspend, pursuant to Section 48911, and shall recommend expulsion of a pupil that he or she determines has committed any of the following acts at school or at a school activity off school grounds:

1. *Possessing, selling, or otherwise furnishing a firearm. This subdivision does not apply to an act of possessing a firearm if the pupil had obtained prior written permission to possess the firearm from a certificated school employee, which is concurred in by the principal or the designee of the principal. This subdivision applies to an act of possessing a firearm only if the possession is verified by an employee of a school district.*
2. *Brandishing a knife at another person.*
3. *Unlawfully selling a controlled substance listed in Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 11053) of Division 10 of the Health and Safety Code.*
4. *Committing or attempting to commit a sexual assault as defined in subdivision (n) of Section 48900 or committing a sexual battery as defined in subdivision (n) of Section 48900.*
5. *Possession of an explosive.*

Due Process Hearings

The District may initiate a due process hearing or request for mediation with respect to a student enrolled in the Charter School if the District determines such action is legally necessary or advisable. The Charter School agrees to cooperate fully with the District in such a proceeding. In the event that the parents/guardians file for a due process hearing, or request mediation, the District and the Charter School shall work together to defend the case. In the event that the District determines that legal representation is needed, the Charter School agrees that it shall be jointly represented by legal counsel of the District's choosing.

The Charter School understands that the District shall have sole discretion to settle any matter in mediation or due process. The District shall also have sole discretion to file an appeal from a due process hearing or take other legal action involving any Charter School student necessary to protect its rights.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

The Charter School shall comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).