Wildflower Open Classroom Charter Petition

A California Public Charter School

Wildflower Open Classroom
2414 Cohasset Road, Suite 3
Chico, CA  95926

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Program Evaluation and Program Improvement Plan

Wildflower Open Classroom evaluates its program every year. Teachers, parents, and students are asked to reflect on ways WOC could be improved. Instruments used to facilitate this process may include:

- student surveys
- parent surveys
- staff and teacher surveys
- teacher self-study materials
- test scores
- periodic review by independent evaluators

Every year, information collected by these means are used to develop a plan for program improvement (also called a strategic plan). The final document will be approved by WOC Board of Directors and presented to the members of Wildflower Open Classroom community and serves as a guide for on-going program improvement.

Volunteer/Parent Roles, Responsibilities, Accountability, and Training

Parents at WOC are required to volunteer a minimum of 75 hours per year (a parent volunteer hours waiver will be available). Parents of WOC students may be involved in the program in four ways:

- attendance at monthly Wildflower Community Council (“WCC”) meetings,
- periodic classroom/grade level gatherings,
- “co-oping” in the classroom,
- participation on a WCC committee.

Attendance at Monthly Wildflower Community Council Meetings

Parents are encouraged to attend monthly WCC meetings. General business will often take place at the WCC meeting, including information from the Board of Directors, discussions about proposals, reminders of upcoming events, committee reports and activities, etc. The WCC meetings provide an opportunity for parents to get to know the teachers and other parents and to develop a deeper understanding of the WOC program. Another purpose of these meetings is to give parents an opportunity to learn about and discuss policies, procedures, and curriculum. Part of each monthly WCC meeting will be devoted to review, seeking feedback from parents about these matters. Concerns and suggestions raised in the monthly WCC meetings are brought to the WOC Board of Directors for consideration. Each classroom has a parent representative assigned to attend, provide information, ask questions and act as general classroom liaison. All parents are expected to attend three mandatory Wildflower Community Council meetings during the year.

Participation at Periodic Classroom/Grade Level Community Gatherings

Parents have the opportunity to participate in parent centered classroom/grade level community gatherings. Depending on workload issues these gatherings will occur periodically. They are coordinated by the classroom/ grade level teacher(s) and a few parents to create an inviting forum for parents to hear about classroom activities/ events, curriculum, classroom needs and in general get to know each other and their classroom/ grade level community. These are informal forum with food and music.

Co-oping

Parents in Wildflower Open Classroom can also participate in the classroom. This is referred to as “co-oping”, and the parents are referred to as "co-opers". In the lower grades at WOC, co-opers have traditionally worked in the classroom, under the direction of the classroom teacher.
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Generally "co-op" in the classroom each week, or participate on staff school committees, or attend monthly classroom/grade level meetings. This allows parents to see for themselves how the curriculum is working for their students. This level of involvement in turn fosters parental involvement in curriculum matters. Parent participation provides important resources to the Charter School. It also keeps the parents informed about their child's education. We have also found that elementary aged children thrive on having a parent or other adult they know in the classroom helping them and their friends.

Parents who experience special hardships in fulfilling/participating in the described co-oping/parent involvement options can work with their classroom teacher or the Wildflower Community Council to find other positive ways for the parent(s) to be involved in the Charter School and their child's education.

Participation in Wildflower Open Classroom Committees

Parents participate on standing Wildflower Open Classroom's WCC committees or perform a specified task(s) that supports the program. The time requirement for committees and tasks vary. Some parents serve on a committee for an entire year while others choose to participate in two tasks.

Parent/ Volunteer Training

While most Wildflower Open Classroom parents are not trained as professional teachers, they are integrally involved in the curriculum and they do interact regularly with students. Therefore, it is necessary that parents have training opportunities available to them.

WOC parents and faculty advisors provide more concentrated training for WOC parents in their first year at WOC. After that, on-going training is organized by the WCC Parent Education committee. In addition to the parent training that has been traditionally provided at WOC, we arrange for parents to receive training on the needs of young adolescents, the unique curriculum provided in the upper grades, and how to best carry out the different co-oping roles in the upper grades (e.g., effective ways to serve on a graduation committee).

As a vital part of the Open Classroom philosophy, parent's participation as instructional partners in the program and their support of the program's philosophy are critical. Wildflower Community Council provides support for academic programs by organizing volunteer and service activities. These activities should focus on fostering community spirit, facilitating the transition of new families into the Charter School, promoting the Charter School in the larger community, and fundraising.

Communication with parents of their opportunities for involvement

Communication with parents regarding their opportunities for involvement is extensive and multi-layered. Following are descriptions of some of the more significant methods:

- The application process itself begins a family's orientation. Tours, evaluations, and agreements assure that parents understand their opportunities for involvement and alternatives available to them. If parents are not able to volunteer or co-op weekly or for a long period of time alternatives are arranged for that particular family.

- In school year 2012-2013 the Wildflower Open Classroom Handbook will be developed and provided to parents near the beginning of the school year and annually each subsequent school year. The handbook outlines the general expectations and opportunities for parents to participate in school governance and committees. The handbook includes a section entitled "Being Heard and Getting Involved at Wildflower Open Classroom".
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- New family orientation meetings are given for each new family welcomed to Wildflower Open Classroom. These orientations include information about program policies, co-oping, committees, and other opportunities to participate.

- Weekly kid faxes/logs – papers sent home with students weekly (e.g., Mondays or Fridays) – provide information about upcoming activities, including meetings and committee work.

- Bulletin boards at WOC provide some of the same information that is in the kid faxes/logs.

- E-mail discussion groups provide some of the same information that is in the kid faxes/logs. Web pages and discussion group archives also provide information.

- The Wildflower Open Classroom e-Newsletter is provided to parents electronically or by paper. The newsletter is distributed weekly; the newsletter contains information about WOC, including Board of Director activities, upcoming events, and examples of WOC’s core values.

- Regular parent meetings allow for discussion of this information.

- Phone trees may be used when information must be shared quickly.

- Whole school email/phone directory (by permission of parent/guardian).

Parent Complaints: procedures for receiving and responding to parent complaints

Wildflower Open Classroom’s problem solving procedure (i.e., Concern & Conflict Resolution Process) will be outlined in the WOC Handbook provided to each family at the beginning of the school year. The Concern & Conflict Resolution Process gives concerned parents a number of options for addressing any dissatisfaction. The Process suggests taking the particular steps in a certain order, but also allows parents to go directly to the director or a mutually agreed teacher when problem solving.

In addition, comments about any concerns that parents have are actively sought during parent meetings. Classroom community support representatives discuss any matters that arise in that context and determine how to take action or, for larger issues, bring the matter to the Board of Directors. Any parent may at any time make a proposal for changes to policies that will be considered by the Board of Directors.

Finally, parents are urged to bring any concerns, including concerns about personnel and legal matters, only to the Director if there is privacy interests involved.

Parents will be given a Wildflower Open Classroom Handbook, which will be reviewed and updated annually. This handbook outlines the role of parents at Wildflower Open Classroom and encourages the families to take in the educational process as it relates to assisting the Charter School, helping their student(s) with homework, attending parent meetings, and assisting in the fundraising activities of the Charter School. Sensitive to the busy schedules of parents, staff members and the Board of Directors/Wildflower Community Council will continually explore ways that all parents can contribute to the program.

Summary

Wildflower Open Classroom promotes a parent participation in the program. Parents are strongly encouraged to dedicate at least two hours per week per child per family of participation to benefit the Charter School. WOC has developed an on-going list of extensive participation opportunities for parents, conducts parent orientation meetings yearly and as needed, and offers extra-curricular activities for both student and parent/family participation.