



WEEKLY NEWSLETTER
August 25, 2017

UPCOMING EVENTS

Monday, September 4
Labor Day, No School

Thursday, September 7
Back to School Night
6:00-7:00

Friday, September 22
Book Fair Begins

Saturday, September 23
Fall Welcome Event

October 5
Conscious Kitchen Family
Dinner

Friday, October 13
Conference Day, No School

Monday, October 16
Staff Day, No School

Friday, November 10
Veteran's Day, No School

November 20-24
Thanksgiving Break, No
School

December 22
Early Release at 12:30

December 25-January 5
Winter Break, No School

Monday, January 8
School Resumes

A Message from Ms. Seekins

Dear Willow Creek families,

Thank you for a wonderful first week of school!

Our regular Friday Posts, along with letters from each grade level, will resume next week. In the meantime, please take some time to review the Willow Creek Pledge we use to start our day and to reflect on our core values of equity and inclusion.

Take care and have a relaxing weekend.

Best,

Tara

All families.
All cultures.
All faiths.
All races.
All abilities.
All gender identities.



I am an ally.
The future is welcome at
Willow Creek Academy.

JARED BAKER

Adrienne Thompson

Kevin Breakstone

Emilie Ralsback

Monica Rizzo



Laura St. Denny

Keely Brink

The Willow Creek Pledge

(Adapted from a pledge created by educator Marva Collins)

Rindsey Roberts

Jennifer Garrade

*This day has been given to me fresh and clear.
I promise myself that I shall use this day to the fullest,
Realizing it can never come back again.
I am the only person who has the power to decide what I will be.
I make myself what I am.*

Wily
Maggie

Jenny Schmidt

We are looking forward to a wonderful new school year!
Thank you for being a part of our community!

Carter Jewel

Alise Reyes

Bonnie Bell

Talissa Lopez

Eliana Hayes

Sumaira Modan

Fred

Jana

Meyna Devol

Jessie

M. Krueger

Anne Jishi

Ally

Emp

Joanna

Kristine Duran

Hope Feldman

Brandon

Ms. R. Inman



Do the best you can until you know better. Then, when you know better, do better.
--Maya Angelou

August 25, 2017

Dear Willow Creek Families,

It is my pleasure to introduce two important elements of our Restorative Justice system at Willow Creek Academy: our Maya Angelou Center for Restorative Practices (known here on campus as "MAC") and our Student Support Specialists for grades K-4 and grades 5-8. This program began as a pilot in 2013 and has grown to be an integral part of our school culture.

Our Restorative Justice system is based on the following principles:

- Building a strong and inclusive school culture (our "social fabric") prevents misconduct.
- Any misconduct tears the social fabric of our school community.
- Students learn from mistakes when they reflect on and repair the harm caused by their misconduct.
- Addressing the root causes of misconduct is critical to resolving it.
- Where appropriate, our community seeks alternatives to discipline that excludes.

Our over-arching goals are for all students to conduct themselves as responsible members of our school community and for our Upper School students, in particular, to serve as positive role models for younger students. In practice, three main components of this work help us to meet these goals:

Community Building: All students attend class meetings each day, where they practice positive communication protocols, connect with their classmates, and problem-solve together. Students in grades 1-8 attend our daily morning assembly where they reaffirm their intention to contribute positively to our school community. Our counselors offer groups where selected students (generally students referred by their teachers) practice pro-social skills development.

Family Group Conferencing: Our staff members use Student Study Team (SST) meetings as a first resort to support students who are experiencing crisis, transition, or other challenges. These meetings bring together the adults who are important in a student's life (including extended family members, coaches, youth ministers, etc.) for a conversation about the student's strengths, our areas of concern, strategies tried, and new strategies the team would like to try. SSTs help us to identify and resolve the root causes of issues that can negatively impact student learning.

Restorative Process: If a student moves through the progressive discipline system in his or her classroom (typically a system of warnings and escalating consequences), he or she will be referred to MAC to participate in a restorative process. At MAC, the student will reflect on the misconduct individually with his or her Student Support Specialist; the student will contact his or her family to

Willow Creek ACADEMY

discuss the misconduct; and, in grades 2-8, the student will complete community enrichment¹ at the school site in order to restore to the community what his or her conduct took away. A typical MAC session involves one or two students from a particular classroom and takes place during an elective class.

The reflection component of a MAC session encourages students to be honest with themselves about what they can do to make changes in their behaviors and relationships. The focus is on helping students feel empowered to make good decisions that will improve themselves and their community. While the focus is restorative and not punitive, we expect students to take MAC seriously. Any student who does not successfully complete any element of his or her MAC session will face consequences through the traditional school discipline system.

Our Student Support Specialists, Carlos Gonzalez (K-4), Phil Logan (5-8) and Jasmin Hall (5-8) are integral to the implementation of Restorative Practices at Willow Creek. Mr. Carlos, Mr. Phil, and Ms. Jasmin closely monitor students in classrooms and at recesses, they lead social skills groups, they provide insight and encourage family involvement during SST meetings, and they facilitate every element of our restorative process. Please see their bios (attached) for more information on the skills and passion they bring to this critically important work.

Over the past five years that we have implemented elements of Restorative Practices at Willow Creek, we have seen a dramatic decline in our referral and suspension rates for all students. This means both that students are receiving the support they need to participate fully in classroom learning activities and that our school climate is a safer, friendlier, and more peaceful place for all our students.

We welcome your questions and feedback about Restorative Practices at Willow Creek. Please direct any inquiries to Tara Seekins, Head of School at 415-331-7530, ext. 213.

Best regards,



Tara Seekins
Head of School

¹ Community enrichment may include: planning and delivering on an act of kindness, creating a presentation or art project focused on an aspect of community, teaching a short lesson on character or kindness in a younger grade classroom, or completing a more traditional form of community service such as campus beautification.

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Carlos Gonzalez – Student Support Specialist (K-5)



My name is Carlos Gonzalez. I was born in Durango, Mexico. I came to the United States at the tender age of five and settled in Berkeley, CA. I attended Berkeley public schools which allowed me to grow up in a very culturally diverse environment. After years in the construction industry I attended evening classes at Berkeley City College. There, I was involved in the PACE program, which is a program set up for working adults who can only attend school in the evening or the weekend. I then attended Cal State East Bay in Hayward, CA, graduating with honors with a Bachelor's degree in Liberal Arts and Human Development. I volunteered at Cherryland Elementary school in Hayward for over five years as an academic mentor, interpreter, and also working with at risk youth to provide social and academic support to children

from all walks of life. I also participated in different gang prevention programs to help steer kids away from gangs and to also teach parents the signs of gang affiliation. Most recently, I worked as a paraeducator serving special education students in San Rafael City Schools. I believe in a hands-on approach and project based learning. I also believe in parent participation and the huge difference that it can make in a child's life.

Jasmin Hall -- Student Support Specialist (5-8)



I first joined the Willow Creek Academy staff in 2012-2013 as a student support specialist with a desire to assist our students in becoming better critical thinkers and communicators. I am a parent myself. My oldest son, Robert, is an alumnus of Willow Creek Academy and my youngest son, Kernus, is entering into his fifth grade year now. I am invested in this school as a part of my community. I want to be supportive to the students and families of Willow Creek Academy through proactive practices of restorative justice, dialoguing, community building, encouragement, and accountability. I believe in the power of self-reflection and I want to teach our students to use it as a tool that helps guide them into making productive/ non-reactive choices for themselves and their community. I am looking forward to this year and all the experiences we will have together.

Joel Villalobos – Student Support Specialist (5-8)



Joel Villalobos was born in San Francisco and raised in Richmond, California where his passion for education began. All the support gained through various mentors motivated him to pursue working with students in order to give others the same support he was given all throughout his educational experience. He graduated from the University of California, Santa Cruz and majored in Environmental Studies with a minor in Education. Throughout college he worked in various settings with students. Joel worked in summer camp programs with the YMCA and COSMOS, which is a 4-week program that supports gifted students in math and science. Joel has also worked in a more traditional classroom setting in Costanoa High School, a continuation school located in Santa Cruz. There he maintained great student relationships with students who often had behavioral issues with the intention to increase their academic success.



WILLOW CREEK ACADEMY

AFTER SCHOOL EXPLORERS

415-577-4888

Director

Paige Rosenthal
prosenthal@willowcreekacademy.org

Assistant Director

Katie Monsma
kmonsma@willowcreekacademy.org

Cost

Half day (until 4:30 pm): \$165

Full day (until 6:00 pm): \$250

Drop in: \$25

Free/reduced fees available

Locations

K/1: Portable 3

2/3: Portable 4

4/5: Portable A

6-8: Sausalito Rec. Center

Program includes

-Snack from Conscious Kitchen

-Group Games

-Reading time/homework

-Free play

-Enrichment activities



After School Explorers

415-577-4888

Director: Paige Rosenthal

prosenthal@willowcreekacademy.org

Assistant Director: Katie Monsma

kmonsma@willowcreekacademy.org

Program Includes

Homework Time Group Games

Enrichment Electivity

Free Play Snack

Locations

K/1: Portable 3

2/3: Portable 4 or ½ yard at beginning of day

4/5: Portable A or basketball court at beginning of day

6-8: Sausalito Rec

End of Day Pickup: Portables 3 and 4