

Wilkinson School Frequently Asked Questions

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What is unique about the Wilkinson School versus other schools?

Relationships, self-esteem, empathy and opportunity. Our students have relationships with every staff member, student and many community members because of our small size and holistic philosophy. Each child is celebrated for her or his unique gifts which lead to greater self-esteem. Our values-based learning focuses on empathy, so students learn to be better friends and citizens. Finally, opportunities with regard to travel, the arts, professionals and individualized programs are unique to our school.

What is your school's philosophy on homework?

Homework has an important function in every school program. At the same time, it should not take away from important family, play and rest time. Because our school day is longer than most, we are careful to measure the amount of homework sent home each week. We also have a new program entitled Homework First whose mission is to get students to complete homework each day immediately after school. We provide a snack, structure, a core teacher and an aide to optimize effectiveness. Balance, success and exploration are three key ingredients of our homework philosophy.

What is your school's philosophy on discipline?

Discipline issues are dealt with in a comprehensive and collaborative manner. Students meet with teachers and other students to work through and to understand difficulties they are having and to set goals for better behavior. Parents and staff work together to create behavior programs with positive incentives that have proven to be very effective at our school.

What is your cut-off for Kindergarten eligibility?

Our junior kindergarten and kindergarten programs are based on readiness and not arbitrary birth dates. As long as a child is 4 years and 9 months- which is the state's licensing restrictions for kindergarten eligibility- and is ready for a structured classroom, he or she is eligible for kindergarten at our school.

Do you offer foreign languages?

We offer Spanish for all grades K–8. We use a hybrid program that we created marrying Rosetta Stone and Sing 'n Speak Spanish. At this time we do not offer any other languages.

What is your philosophy on testing?

We test our students every year with the nationally–normalized California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS). We also have many other tests and assessments throughout the year. The results are very important information that we use to track the student’s and the school’s overall growth and areas for improvement. However, our philosophy is that these are only tools and should never be the driving force of education. Recent studies have proven that brain growth is enormous from early elementary throughout the middle school years. These studies have all suggested that test scores do nothing to predict future academic success. At the Wilkinson School our approach is not teaching to the test, but instead, challenging each individual student to reach her or his potential while also celebrating his or her unique talents.

How do your students fair at bigger schools once they graduate from Wilkinson School?

Because of the exposure to many cultures, people and places through field trips, yearly performances and daily public speaking opportunities, and a philosophy that promotes individuals working as mentors, leaders and team members, our students have a strong record of succeeding at bigger public and private schools.

Is it difficult for your middle school students to have fewer peers than they would at a larger school?

Our philosophy about middle school is that children need more support than ever because of the tremendous changes that occur while transitioning from childhood to adolescence. Our environment promotes opportunities for leadership with the security that the attentiveness of a small community affords. Many middle school students have transferred to Wilkinson from larger schools and excelled because of the absence of peer pressure and the strong sense of connectivity, supervision and purpose they had not previously experienced.

What high schools do your graduates attend?

For near thirty–five years our graduates have gone on to attend many prestigious and competitive high schools and colleges. Around 60% have attended or are attending private schools all around the San Francisco Bay area, and 40% attend Half Moon Bay High School. Our graduates begin high school with many advantages due to exposure to accelerated programs, public speaking, leadership and social skills, self–esteem and responsibility that is explored at our school.

Is there a governing board of your school?

Currently the school is a corporation headed by two co–owners, Doug Bannick and Tim Miller. We include every parent, staff member and student in the ongoing evolution of the school.

Are there sports at your school?

Between hikes, P.E. and Dance, we have some variation of physical exercise every day at the Wilkinson School. In P.E., we concentrate most on cooperative games, although we do cover many sports in our curriculum. There are no sports’ teams at our school, but our students are actively involved in the many sports leagues on the coast.

Is there a special education program at your school?

Each year we assist with a number of students who have different types of learning difficulties. We are limited in what the school is able to offer in special education, so we carefully assess when a

student would be better served in a state-funded school.

What are the expectations of parent participation at your school?

We could not do all the trips, special events and school improvement projects without the tremendous support of our parents. We do suggest 20 hours of volunteer time per family each year, but at this point it remains an informal request.

Is there a waiting list at your school?

We often do have a waitlist but encourage prospective families to contact Mr. Miller about openings in any of our grade levels.
