

Seaside Wisdom For Life School

1200 Cardiff Drive
Encinitas, CA 92024

Telephone: 760-753-5786, ext. 22

Email: kalli@adnc.com

“Education is more than a transmission of facts and skills. To truly educate is to draw forth the qualities of heart and intellect that make for excellence in both human development and academic achievement.”

Dr. Tobin Hart, psychologist and author of *From Information to Transformation: Education for the Evolution of Consciousness*

WHAT WE PROUDLY OFFER

- A new heart-centered system and a sense of unity that enables the educators and parents to establish education on a more humane and spiritual platform. We at WFLS realize education is a vital agent for our evolution.
- The demonstration of universal values, diversity and honoring of a child’s Inner Wisdom, encouraging conscious awareness and spiritual character development.
- Experiential learning, an integrated curriculum and life-long skills for living, assists students to create their path to a happy, purpose-filled life.
- An extraordinary learning environment and the joy of discovery.

Our Mission:

***Wisdom For Life School* demonstrates universal values, respects diversity and honors a child’s Inner Wisdom, encouraging conscious awareness and spiritual character development. Through a heart-centered approach, experiential learning, an integrated curriculum and life-long skills for living, students create their path to a happy, purpose-filled life.**

WELCOMING MESSAGE FROM FOUNDING FAMILY

Welcome! It occurs to me that if you are reading this, perhaps we are already meeting on common ground. We both have a heart-felt desire to provide our children with a positive, supportive environment for learning. A system that offers a more balanced and holistic approach that includes mind, body and soul awareness, as well as academic, intellectual offerings, thus assisting students to truly thrive. What we want as parents for our children is based on our personal values and individual belief systems. Our choices and decisions start here. A child's education often reflects a parents hopes, dreams and goals for their child.

For Christian and I, this was the starting point for the *Seaside Wisdom For Life School* (SWFLS). Our son Trevor is five and starting kindergarten this fall. We recognize that other than that of parents and the home environment, a child's school has the strongest influence on their growth and expansion. We wanted a learning environment not only in alignment with our values but one that honors his Inner Wisdom and encourages spiritual character development a long side emotional and intellectual awareness. We wanted a more heart-centered, life-enriching approach. Dr. Tobin Hart, psychologist and author of *From Information to Transformation: Education for the Evolution of Consciousness* addresses this well, "Education is more than a transmission of facts and skills. To truly educate is to draw forth the qualities of heart and intellect that make for excellence in both human development and academic achievement. We cannot truly learn unless we make space for the inner life in which reflection, imagination and intuition are cultivated." In our search for such a place that embraces this philosophy, we found few alternative options in the North County of San Diego area.

In October 2004 I had the pleasure of attending *ChildSpirit*, a children's spirituality and educational conference attended by hundreds of parents, educators and researchers. In doing so I had the opportunity to attend a presentation regarding a well-established, but relatively unknown, educational system with more than thirty years experience in teaching universal values and encouraging conscious awareness. Similar to our church principles, this approach embraces the unity of all religions and their common purpose in helping people experience joy, love and peace, qualities more important than ever before in the culture and times we live in. I was surprised to find a pre-existing model which respects diversity and the development of autonomy and interdependence. Here was a small community of schools and teachers whom also recognize and acknowledge children to be naturally happy, free, spontaneous beings who know how to live instinctively in harmony and unity when not suppressed by cultural or societal norms. This was indeed an organization that **Seaside Church** could be proud and honored to be associated with. This was to become the model and the roots for **Seaside Wisdom For Life School**. Personally, it is very exciting for me to introduce such a great life-enriching system of education to this area for the first time.

Many people today recognize that a fundamental change in education is urgently needed for the overall welfare of our children and our evolution. SWFLS is now answering this call for change and embracing a new whole-child approach to education. We are starting by establishing mutually respectful relationships between children, parents and teachers. This is a system in which the teachers relate as partners with students in a program designed to promote cooperation instead of competition. Where parents and teachers participate as a unified whole to form the foundation for SWFLS.

Wisdom For Life School's affiliation with the **Seaside Church** community brings a supportive network in many ways to the school that a small independent school would not have. There are many resources to draw from within a larger community. The association with **Seaside Church** gives the school a spiritual energy that it might not otherwise have. Not all the families in the school will choose to be involved with the church, some will come from other various spiritual traditions and cultures, enabling a diverse community within the classroom. One can be involved with the church or not, there is really no distinction made about it.

Seaside Church is also one of only three campuses in the country for the *Holmes Institute* for ministerial education providing an accredited master degree in consciousness studies. As an educational destination, we recognize the need to bring a higher awareness to our youth which will now take place on the same campus. We, and many others over the last decade, have shared and held the vision of a spiritually based, non-profit, private school on our grounds. We will be one of the first Religious Science Churches to accomplish this.

So it is with intention for the highest good for all our children that we invite you to come explore. Ask yourself what your core values for your family are and what type of an educational environment your child would best thrive in. Then take a look at what is offered here at **Wisdom For Life School** and listen to your heart for the answer. For there in lies the answers we seek for our children.

As a united, unified community we can expand the consciousness of many more children. May your path lead you to discover the optimum place of learning for your child. Honoring the importance of your decision, we invite you to contact us so that we may support you. Please let us know if you have further questions, considerations or comments. We thank you for considering the SWFLS in your search.

With Love and Compassion,
Kalli Holmes-Sorensen
Mother and Seaside Wisdom for Life School Founder

Rev, Christian Sorensen, D.D.
Spiritual Leader Seaside Church

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

Imagine a school that offers... A holistic system of education that emphasizes:

- Universally valued spiritual qualities and principles
- The honoring of all religions, faiths and traditions
- Spiritual character development
- Conscious awareness and self-understanding
- Inherent intuition and Inner Wisdom
- Mind, body and spirit awareness
- Environmental appreciation and connectedness
- Reason balanced by feeling
- Peace through compassion and cooperation
- Cause and effect and directed intention
- Conflict resolution and stress management
- The discovery of each child's essential strengths
- Respect and encouraging individuality
- Emotional harmony with self and others
- Humility, liberty and reverence for all life
- Positive gender relations
- Calm focus and quiet contemplation
- Parent and community involvement
- Altruism through community and global service

Imagine a school that has.... An expansive approach which offers children:

- Small class sizes with individual attention
- Low student/teacher ratio of 1/8-10
- Small family-like atmosphere
- A relaxed, joyful environment
- Integrated curriculum
- Progressive development
- Experiential learning
- Multi-cultural education
- Language for multilingual competence
- Affirmative thought
- Creative and expressive skill development
- Yoga and movement
- Knowledge and care of the physical body
- Practical skills for living
- Logical, solution – oriented learning
- Authentic, individual assessments
- Academic success without stress

This is our vision and values for Wisdom For life School.....

More about Wisdom For Life School

Wisdom For Life School (WFLS) is a private, nonprofit, independent educational institution. The system of education used at WFLS and Living Wisdom Schools is called “*Education For Life*” (EFL) and is based on the principles outlined in the book, *Education For Life*, by J. Donald Walters. The roots of the EFL system lie in **universal truths** and share aspects of many other faiths, cultures and traditions.

WFLS is based on an already tested and proven educational system with over 30 years of successful, conscious teaching in an extraordinary learning environment. WFLS is affiliated with four *Education For Life* schools in the United States. It is a holistic system of education that emphasizes experiential learning and practical skills for living. It is an approach which balances mind, body and spirit through personal, physical, mental and spiritual development.

“Truth cannot be learned it can only be recognized.” J. Donald Walters

Our Philosophy:

- Wisdom For Life School philosophy offers a new heart-centered system of values and unity of the educators and parents to establish education on a more humane and spiritual platform. We at WFL realize education is a vital agent for our evolution.
- Revealing the consciousness of wisdom and spiritual power through awareness, self-understanding, mental clarity and listening to your inner wisdom for guidance and balanced growth.
- High values and high ideals. Universal values-honesty, generosity, love, living in harmony with each other, nature and all of life.
- The importance of self-expression through music, song, movement and dance. Playfulness and fun approaches to learning.
- A positive approach working with a child’s strengths rather than concentrating on their weaknesses where the intrinsic value, worth and dignity of every human being is emphasized and behaviors rather than individuals are labeled.
- Children of the school are nurtured and reminded by word and action that they are special and unique. An atmosphere is created which enables the child to feel accepted and approved.
- Consistent gentle guidance to help children recognize for themselves which actions and choices lead to personal happiness for themselves and others. (Cause and effect).
- Creative application of *Education For Life* principles that make subjects more immediately human and less abstract and statistical.
- Skills for living including positive attitude, affirmative thought, concentration, meditation, cooperation and collaboration, and how to build friendships.
- Children are encouraged to mentor each other informally and through a program of volunteer peer helpers.
- An expansive system focused on the child’s own inner joy, peace and their natural curiosity and desire to learn.

- The development of their will power, the value of feelings and the joy of discovery.
- *Wisdom For Life School* assists children to develop their own unique potentials and gives them the tools to make life choices that lead to lasting happiness.
- The use of an authentic student assessment system and progress report rather than letter grades, bringing out each child's personal best without competition.
- Success is gauged not only by individual results but by the quality of each child's attitude, effort and interactions with others. Academic success without stress assists students to become successful human being.

“If you treat an individual as if her were what he ought to be and could be, he will become what he ought to be and could be.” Goethe

HOLISTIC EDUCATION

Mind/Academics - What makes us different than other schools?

True greatness focuses on reality. Through **experiential learning and Natural Law**, lessons are learned by actual experience- demonstratable truths rather than abstract theories. Academics are taught holistically and curriculum at WFLS is integrated, maximizing whole brain development through the inclusion of art, dance, music and theater. Education is made **relevant to actual needs and interests** of each student with Individual Learning Plans (ILP), allowing each child to learn at their mental, emotional, developmental level and utilizing practical, solution-oriented learning rather than fact-gathering, theoretical ideas, and memorization. WFLS uses supportive learning, teaching skills for life which are more clearly focused on human needs and interests and how to develop one's talents and abilities to **reach their true potential**.

WFLS assists children in the exercise of everyday logic and common sense and a love of learning is stressed, teaching how to learn and how to ask questions, think, analyze, conclude and communicate. They discover how to see, hear, observe, feel, and create using all their senses; to develop their **inherent intuition** and recognize the difference between knowledge and wisdom, therefore making education a means of encouraging not forcing the **development of wisdom**. Consistent, gentle guidance is given to help children recognize for themselves the **value of feelings** and which actions and choices lead to personal happiness for themselves and others. Most importantly, they develop self-confidence through kindness and supportive guidance. An enriched academic program, combined with attention to the individual child's emotional needs fosters an atmosphere for joyful learning. When a child feels safe and loved they are free to be themselves, becoming an inwardly strong, secure person. With self-assurance and confidence in their abilities, they are wide open to learn anything!

"From their errors and mistakes the wise and good learn wisdom for the future." Plutarch

"When academic culture dismisses inner truth and honors only the external world, students as well teachers lose here." Parker Palmer

Spirit/ Inner Life - What is the meaning of Life?

We believe a growing child needs faith just as urgently as s/he needs air to breath. While **spiritual principles** lie at the core of EFL approach, “religious instruction” is not provided in the traditional, parochial sense. The focus is more on developing qualities that are universally valued in all religions. **All religions are honored** with children of many faiths attending EFL schools who find their understanding of their faith is strengthened by this experience. Spirituality is thought of as the foundation of life, the essence of who we are, not as much as a subject we study as the way we live. **The unity of all religions** and their common purpose is emphasized in helping children experience joy, love and peace without religious dogma or practices but more on applying spiritual principles to one’s own life.

WFLS assists children to cultivate an inner life, respecting and supporting their intuitive awakening to a greater reality. A child’s natural spirituality is acknowledged and honored. Focusing on a child’s own direct experience of universal spiritual Truths, they are able to develop an inner source of strength they can draw on for the rest of their lives. Through the demonstration of high values and ideals they gain a deeper understanding of the ultimate meaning of life.

At WFLS we feel children should benefit from the wisdom and Truth gathered throughout the ages concerning how to live a happy, harmonious and fulfilling life. Each day there is time for singing, chanting, quiet meditation, affirmations and setting one’s intention for the day. Movement, music, yoga and other uplifting activities allow children to embody a feeling of calm centeredness. Through these forms or worship, the children experience for themselves harmony and a higher level of consciousness.

“The children of wisdom look to the inner and not to the outer for justification.”
Ernest Holmes, Founder of Science of Mind

“Where Unity of all faiths and traditions are embraced peace prevails.”
Rev. Christian Sorensen, D.D., Spiritual Leader Seaside Church

Body/ Recreation – Why is personal health important?

Care of the **physical body is valued** and seen as the ultimate tool to be developed and maintained through nutritious food that will help them feel better in all departments of their lives. Recognizing proper nutrition will assist in developing a student's ability to absorb the information they receive.

A steady **routine of exercise** can become a habit for children. Discovering forms of physical exercise that will benefit them throughout their lives rather than leave lasting injuries. Children can be taught to recognize the fact that the physical body may have to serve its owner for another seventy to eighty years and ought to be treated well. Good diet, right exercise, regular exposure to sunlight and fresh air: These can develop the body as a tool for the long-range efficiency of the whole being.

Yoga, calm focus and quiet time for contemplation are encouraged. Dance, movement and art as forms of **self-expression or creative play** are a part of the everyday routine. Teachers nurture the natural creativity in students and the desire for fantasy and imaginative play as an avenue to unexplored capabilities.

“The whole being needs to be fed-bread for the body, knowledge and wisdom for the soul, atmosphere and consciousness for the spirit.” Ernest Holmes, Founder of Science of Mind

ENRICHED ACADEMICS

Six Areas of Learning

There is an inclusion of standard academic subjects with a redefinition of categories such as the following six areas. The goal of the curriculum is to help each student expand in a balanced way, develop greater maturity, and experience true success and happiness. An enriched, integrated curriculum offers children fun, experiential learning in a relaxed, often playful manner. Each area is adapted to the various grade levels to be age appropriate for each child.

Our Earth / Our Universe (Science Math and Cosmology)

- **Encourages expansion** in relation to the physical world.
- Fosters a vision of the orderliness of the universe.
- Discovers an appreciation for the ecological balance of all life.
- Recognizing their place in the universe and feeling of connection to all.
- Understanding of Natural Law and universal principles such as cause and effect.
- Environmental awareness that prompts conservation and respect for all things

Personal Development and Self-Knowledge (P.E. Health)

- **Encourages expansion** in physical, mental and spiritual growth.
- Developing physical awareness: strength and coordination through jump rope, ball skills, rhythm, dance, Brain Gym, and yoga postures.
- Listening appropriately in a variety of situations.
- Experiencing personal energy control and the awareness and ability to control or change energy.
- Nutrition and dis-ease prevention

Understanding Humanity (History, Geography, Sociology)

- **Encourages expansion** through learning about experiences and perspectives of others, focusing on what human beings everywhere want most deeply in life.
- Studying not only great things people have achieved but the human qualities that enable them to attain those achievements.
- Exploring the history of other religions, cultures and customs surrounding seasonal celebrations and festivals.
- Understanding relationships with ourselves and others as explored through stories, discussion, introspection, visualization and role playing.

Cooperation and Consideration (Sociology and Psychology)

- **Encourages expansion** through harmonious relationships with others, conflict resolution strategies, solution oriented thinking and appreciation of individual differences.
- Interaction with others, respect, compassion, consideration, compromise and the willingness to be flexible.
- Sharing resources, working together and practicing life skills for cooperation and global community.

Self-Expression and Communication (Reading, Writing, Spelling, Art, Music, Theater Production)

- **Encourages expansion** by developing clarity of mind.
- Emphasizing the expression of creativity in the highest way possible for each student.
- Exposure to culturally diverse literature
- Developing an early appreciation of the Arts through direct, hands-on-experience.
- Demonstrating the importance of communication and all the ways it can be achieved.

Wholeness and Fulfillment (Spirituality, Personal Growth)

- **Encourages expansion** through the whole being and gives cohesion to the entire system.
- Through a brief devotional circle time or ceremony students lead a prayer, sing or chant, read inspirational stories together or practice visualization and affirmative thoughts.
- Moving towards the expression of joy and happiness for self and others and the value of feelings.

An individual assessment system and progress report is used rather than letter grades, bringing out each child's personal best without competition. Success is gauged not only by individual results but by the quality of each child's attitude, effort and interactions with others. **Academic success without stress** assists students to become successful human being.

“In the final analysis...the main function of education is to make children happy, fulfilled universal beings.” Robert Muller, Former UN Assistant Secretary General

“The heart is the chief feature of a functioning mind.” Frank Lloyd Wright

TEACHER PROFILE

The most important aspect of the curriculum is the teacher because it is through magnetism that we learn. Consciousness is, in some regards, more important than curriculum. **WFLS teachers** embody the principles and have the spiritual consciousness as well as teaching experience. A good motto could be, as Emerson paraphrases, “Who you are speaks louder than what you say!” In their presence, personal character leaves a more lasting impression than verbal philosophy or lesson plans. The examples of human qualities that they set inspire the children to aspire to nobility of character.

WFLS teachers are authentic, and the children sense it immediately. The teachers express an open-hearted sensitivity and, in their own way, the positive attitudes, spiritual and moral values and maturity they seek to develop in their children. They are actively committed to their personal and spiritual development. They meditate regularly and practice the principles of emotional self-mastery that form the foundation of our educational approach. They, themselves, are life-long learners.

WFLS teachers are able to see the unique gifts in each child and to celebrate them in a hundred ways in the course of the school day. Through encouragement, positive affirmation, challenge and support, celebration and joy they allow children to express and grow in a loving, nurturing, and non-threatening environment.

WFLS teachers understand that fine teaching is an art and a science, driven by inspiration, not coercion. They focus on the positive, not the negative. On solutions, not problems. Creativity and spontaneity as well as discipline and structure infuse their pedagogy. There is order and appropriate discipline and a clear sense the teacher is in charge. At **WFLS teachers** win the children’s respect and consideration through wise guidance and by skillfully awakening their enthusiasm and energy for the tasks at hand; teaching children the desire for learning and encouraging individual exploration. WFLS recognizes the law of basic motivation - what one desires in their heart **is** at the heart of everything they do toward the fulfillment of happiness.

“It is the supreme art of the teachers to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.”

Albert Einstein

“Education is not the filling of a pad, but the lighting of a fire.” William Butler Yeats

**“What we are teaches the child more than what we say,
so we must be what we want our children to become.” Joseph Chilton Pearce**

“Teachers are those who use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross, then having facilitated their crossing, joyfully collapse, encouraging them to create bridges of their own.”
Nikos Kazantzakis

GRADE LEVELS AND FEATURES

Seaside Wisdom For Life School has plans to open in Fall 2005-6 with a limited enrollment of 12-16 students. Our short-term goal is to start with **Kindergarten/First grade levels (or 5-7 year olds)** with integrated classes and the intention to grow one grade and/or class each year. This will be based on the current need and advance pre-registration. Long-term, we hope to offer K-6th grade levels. See more under **Application Process**

We also look to the future to offer **home school resources** for families looking for alternative ideas and a spiritual platform. This could be a great source of support for families already opting for home schooling whom have older children or for those out of the area looking for on-line resources.

Our School Features:

- Small, intimate class size
- Quaint, home-like setting
- Ocean view form class room
- Quiet, spacious, lush environment
- Adjacent to 2 public parks
- Outdoor patio, courtyard
- Meditation garden with pond
- Indoor and outdoor performance stages
- Spacious auditorium
- Kitchen and banquet facilities
- Supportive community

Kindergarten Offers:

- Holistic approach with emphasis on the whole child
- Flow learning: awaken enthusiasm, focus attention, direct experience
- Progressive Development
- Skills or qualities for living
- Self-expression through art, music, theatre and movement
- Fantasy, imagination and creative play
- Emotional harmony
- Calm focus and yoga

Tools of Maturity – True Maturity can be defined as the ability to relate appropriately to realities other than your own. At **Wisdom For Life School** we feel true maturity comes through an expanded awareness in the following 5 areas:

- **Body**- increasing health and high energy and bodily self-control
- **Feeling**- emotional calmness, compassion and expansive feeling
- **Mind**- mental clarity and a clear-sighted, practical intellect
- **Will** – dynamic, persistent will power
- **Soul**- conscious awareness and inner wisdom

In order to function fully and effectively in this world, a child needs to develop themselves in all of these areas of maturity. Children need to be invited to grow toward maturity, advancing one step at a time instead of making a giant mental leap into the future. Only by understanding and respecting ones nature as it is can one be helped to achieve the equilibrium of true maturity. Teachers address all four areas with the awareness that at different stages of development the emphasis is on different Tools. We see each child as a beautiful soul with infinite potential. We strive to mirror their strengths and gifts rather than focusing on deficiencies.

OUR SISTER SCHOOLS

Seaside Wisdom For life School is associated with Living Wisdom Schools. They are independently, incorporated, educational institutions with over 35 years of proven, tested, experience in education body, mind and spirit. The system of education used at Living Wisdom Schools is called “Education For Life” (EFL) and is based on the principles outlined in the book, *Education For Life*, by J. Donald Walters. The roots of the EFL system lie in the philosophy of Paramhansa Yogananda, the great Indian teacher and author of *Autobiography of a Yogi*. This revolutionary approach is based on his pioneering work in India, in the early years of the Twentieth Century, with whom Mr. Walters lived as a disciple. Truth is universally rooted so it shares some aspects of other educational philosophies. Children of many faiths attend Living Wisdom Schools and find that their understanding of their faith is strengthened by their experience.

Education for Life is a **holistic system of education** which emphasizes experiential learning, spiritual development and practical skills for living such as concentration, self-awareness, self-discipline and compassion. It is an approach which balances mind, body and spirit through personal, physical, mental, spiritual development.

Nevada City, Ca, Founded in 1971

Pre-k-12th, boarding and day school, 48 enrolled

<http://www.livingwisdom.org>

530.478.7640

Ananda University

14618 Tyler Fotte Rd. #114

Nevada City, CA 95959

530.292.3024

<http://www.anandauniversity.org>

Palo Alto, CA, founded in 1991

K-8th, currently with 50 students enrolled

1-10 student/teacher ration

650.462.8150

<http://www.livingwisdomschool.org>

Portland, Oregon, founded in 1997

Pre-k-6th with currently 30 enrolled

503.671.9112

<http://www.livingwisdomschool.net>

Seattle, WA,

Pre-school only

206.790.5905

www.livingwisdompreschool.com

Education For Life

www.evl.com

OTHER USEFUL LINKS:

www.seasidechurch.org (*On welcoming page and useful links*)

United Church of Religious Science www.religiousscience.org

UCORS International Youth and Family Ministires www.religiousscience.org/youth

UCRS Global Heart Statement www.religiousscience.org/heart/statement.html

Holmes Institute www.holmesinstitute.org *On welcoming page and useful links*

ChildSpirit Institute www.childspirit.net (*on welcome page and useful links*)

PARENT TESTIMONIALS

What do parents from our sister school in Palo Alto, Living Wisdom School say?

“My daughter can be herself at LWS. When she was at public school I felt she was trying so hard to find out who she was supposed to be that she missed noticing who she actually was.”

“You never see a child at LWS trying to be somebody else in order to be loved and accepted.”

“The LWS gives children the one thing they really need above all; a spiritual foundation, something deeper for them to rely on.”

“Children develop an inner source of strength they can draw on always. They get to discover who they really are.”

“The children are completely comfortable at school. In fact, since going to LWS they have developed such confidence they are not afraid of any new situation.”

“The children get so much love, they feel safe to be themselves. Then anything can happen; learning growing, they are just wide open. They have so self-assurance, so much confidence in their abilities, they can learn anything.”

“The kindergarten put on an improvisational dance program. All the other kids in the school were in the audience with the parents. Afterwards there was an all-school circle on stage and everyone singing. I looked at my children’s faces and they were so happy and so content. I just knew my children were loved and cared for and that I could never find a better place for them.”

What do parents from our sister school in Portland, Living Wisdom School say?

“I am very impressed with the school-and so very happy for the education and love that my daughter is receiving.” L.S., mother of second grader

“Just a note of thanks for the lasting and important difference your school has made in the life of our beloved great-nephew. You’ve helped him to learn how to let love and calmness shine from him.” T.E., great-aunt of kindergartener

“My daughter has become a wonderful actress and an enthusiastic scholar under the care of her teachers at living Wisdom School!” D.P., mother of fifth grader

“Our daughter loves it at Living Wisdom School. The small classroom sizes and overall sense of togetherness helps her to have close relationships with teachers and other children. I think she feels like apart of the school, rather than just another student. I love the educational variety that the school has to offer, teaching lessons of both the heart and mind. It keeps her balanced and eager to learn.” C.K., mother of fist grader

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The following is generously contributed by Education For Life based, Living Wisdom School in Portland, Oregon. This is one of our sister schools and is in alignment with our philosophy at Wisdom for life School.

QUESTION:

Your school sounds great, but what happens when children have to leave there and go into the “real world”?

ANSWER:

We are always happy to hear this question because it means you’ve noticed what an unusually fine environment we have created here at Living Wisdom School. And you know that most schools are not like ours. So the fear arises: “Are we raising ‘hothouse children’ that thrive in this environment, but wilt as soon as they are transplanted to any other soil?” It’s a very good question.

The fact is, children from Living Wisdom Schools thrive in whatever environments they find themselves. Although our school appears to be a sheltered environment, in that we have maintained a kind of innocence and harmony that is rare in schools these days, make no mistake: Our children are not protected from the lessons they need to grow up strong and capable. Much of the credit for the positive environment also belongs to the children. The teachers put before them a formidable challenge, and the children rise to meet it.

For at Living Wisdom School we ask much more of the children than most schools do. We take responsibility in the way that parents do: every aspect of the child is attended to. Our highly enriched academic program also includes training in essential life skills, such as self-understanding, good character, courage, sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others, dynamic energy, will power, positive personal habits, right attitude, skill in resolving conflicts, the ability to be kind and to choose happiness, and developing an inner life.

How do we do it? A very committed and highly trained staff, small classes, individualized attention—these are the foundation stones. The details are the whole educational system we follow called Education for Life. It’s much more than we can explain here, but these are some of the keys.

First is the attitude of the teachers toward the children. Every child is respected and celebrated as an individual. We don’t start with a predetermined mold that your child has to fit into. We start with the child, guiding each one’s development along the lines most natural to him or her. Sometimes a challenge is necessary, so we don’t hesitate when necessary to be firm, but always in a positive and loving way, in harmony with the deeper nature of the child we are serving.

You may think this sounds too idealistic to be real. We encourage you to talk to the parents of children now attending Living Wisdom School. Or read their words in the testimonial sheet below.

Starting in the youngest grades, we teach the children how to get along with one another. Harmony and cooperation is an art that can be learned. We help the children understand their own feelings, to put words on what they feel, to work things out. We go farther than just resolving disagreements. We help happy children become more consciously aware of how to, as we put it, “choose happiness” and “practice kindness,” rather than feeling they have to just wait and hope that it comes to them.

Everything is designed to help children develop confidence in themselves. A confident child can learn and accomplish anything. Once children lose confidence in themselves, however, learning becomes almost impossible. The emphasis on the strengths of each child is an important characteristic of the Education for Life classroom. The recognition of children’s talents, whether academic, physical, social, feeling, or character strengths, gives a huge boost to their confidence.

And what’s the result? Children flourish in our environment. And when they leave to other schools, or to participate in extracurricular activities in the greater community such as sports, music, or other hobbies, they take with them an ability to learn new things, to make friends, to stand up for themselves if necessary, to relate appropriately to others, to face and overcome challenges. They are a standout in any environment.

Whenever we take our classes on field trips, the docents will say, “Who are these children? They ask such good questions and are so attentive to the answers. They are mature and harmonious with one another.” Even the Captain at the fire station said he had never had such thoughtful questions from any other kindergarten class. One museum guide gave us her resume in the hope that we could hire her as a teacher!

To be strong in oneself—that is the great gift children receive from Living Wisdom School. They own that, and take it with them wherever they go.

QUESTION:

All this sounds good, but what are they actually learning of reading, writing, science, math and everything else they’ll need for high school and university life? It’s a very competitive world academically. Will they be prepared?

ANSWER:

The atmosphere of Living Wisdom School makes possible a highly enriched academic program. Naturally we make sure they are progressing in accordance with statewide standards, but that is just the starting point. The goals of our academic program are to help the children:

- Gain confidence in their own ability to do things they’ve never done before, to absorb new information, to face challenges and solve problems
- Learn how to learn, to study and master anything that interests them, in or out of school
- Discover that learning is fun, to develop love and enthusiasm for learning, to embrace it as life-long adventure
- Think creatively, be unafraid to take risks, knowing that failure is often the foundation for ultimate success

- Go deeply into each subject, to see the interrelationships, how life is a whole picture, not a series of unrelated fragments
- Achieve one's highest potential

How do we do this? In addition to the overall atmosphere described above, the key concepts are:

- Experiential learning
- Individualized instruction
- Integrated curriculum in which subject areas overlap and combine rather than remaining discrete, separate entities

This academic approach is very much in keeping with leading edge research, which shows that even the physical brain in young children develops differently if their early education is “brain compatible.”

We have an individual assessment system, rather than letter grades. With letter grades, we soon discovered that the focus for the children shifted too easily from what they were learning to the grade they were getting. Letter grades also tend to put children in competition with one another in a way that does not foster true learning. Bright children learn how to get A's rather than going deeply into the subject at hand. Individual assessment more easily brings out each child's personal best.

Small class size and low student/teacher ratio, allows us to be flexible in the timing of when children meet the required academic standards. What is considered the norm is simply an average that by definition cannot apply uniformly to every child. Why hold back the advanced children or undermine the confidence of those who bloom late? With the right attention, all children can express their full potential.

In the cooperative and supportive atmosphere of Living Wisdom School, children have little sense of being “ahead” or “behind.” Every genuine achievement is celebrated, and the children have great incentive to progress. Children can work at different grade levels in different subjects, and children feel comfortable and have friends of all ages within the school family.

In standardized testing, children from Living Wisdom School usually score in the 90th percentile and above, in all subjects, including math and science.

QUESTION:

You make reference to “universal spirituality.” What does that mean and how is it expressed in the classroom?

ANSWER:

Most children instinctively know that they are part of a greater reality. At Living Wisdom School, we simply support and encourage this natural awareness.

Spirituality to us is an inner reality first, and only secondarily the specific form through which it is expressed. We see the various religious traditions as individual branches of the

same great tree. Spirituality is the foundation of life, the essence of who we are and of everyone who shares this planet with us. It's not as much a subject we study, as the way we live, the values and attitudes expressed in what we do.

We help the children cultivate a conscious, inner relationship with God. We pray to "Heavenly Father, Divine Mother, and/or Infinite Spirit within me." We celebrate through many different traditions as examples of how people through the ages have experienced and given form to the inner reality we all share.

Morning circle may include prayer, healing prayers for those in need, and quiet time that helps children experience what would otherwise just be intellectual concepts. Stories, affirmation, music, and yoga may be parts of the opening circle as well.

Spirituality, however, is not limited to circle time. All through the day, we'll make reference to spiritual principles as a way of dealing with whatever comes up, whether it's a conflict with another child, or learning how to do your best on a times test in math. We help the children learn how to look within for clarity, calmness, and an intuitive understanding of what to do.

They learn to ask for God's help as easily and naturally as they ask a teacher to guide them. Instead of thinking that they are all alone in this world and have to solve every problem by themselves, they gradually learn that God is their Divine Friend, always there to help them.

An open attitude toward the spiritual side of life makes it easier to talk about the big questions, too, like death, disappointment, the apparent inequality of the world, right attitudes, the need to strive for excellence, kindness, secrets of happiness.

In classrooms we have altars that display symbols from various of the world's religions. The children learn that there have been many great spiritual figures through the ages, whose inspirations from God have evolved into different religious traditions.

The altar is an active part of the classroom, and the children may add to it whatever items they, too, consider sacred, drawing on the tradition of their families, or their personal inspiration. Contributions range from an antique rosary, to a rock, to a picture of Grandma. Everything in its own way can be a source of inspiration.

The children are encouraged to respect these symbols, but not to be intimidated by them. Objects move on and off the altar all the time. The children incorporate them in their creative work and in their play. It's not uncommon to see a block structure in the kindergarten topped with a statue of Buddha or a picture of the Virgin Mary, or maybe both together.

Our parents tell us that the spirituality their children express is entirely their own. It comes from a wellspring of understanding deep within themselves. It's encouraged by

their experiences at Living Wisdom School, but what they end up with is entirely and uniquely their own.

QUESTION:

I've been looking at a lot of schools and it seems to me that you either get a nurturing environment or you get a strong academic program. You seem to be saying that your school provides both. How is that possible?

ANSWER:

So many parents have just the same concern you are expressing. Children want to play and be free to do whatever they want, without any regard or even awareness of the implications for themselves or others. The adults responsible for raising and educating them, however, know that childhood is also a time to learn self-discipline and the many skills needed to take one's place in an adult world. Parents struggle with this every day. So do teachers.

Be assured, Living Wisdom School is innovative, but we are innovative toward a higher and better academic standard, not away from it. And the very things that attract you to it, the nurturing and supportive atmosphere, are, we explained earlier, the key to what makes it better academically as well.

School is challenging for many children. But challenge can also be fun, if the challenge is presented in the right way, and if the children know that the very people who are presenting the challenge will also give them the guidance and support they need to meet it. This is the secret of our success at Living Wisdom School.

We know our school is unusual. That's why we encourage you to talk to other parents who can answer your questions from their own experience. Just ask, and we'll give you a list of parents who are willing to talk **with you**.

Seaside Wisdom for Life School
1200 Cardiff Drive, Encinitas, CA 92024
Pre-registration For 2005-2006 Enrollment

Application Date: _____

Child's Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Grade/Fall 2005: _____

Parents or Guardians:

Mother's Name:

Residence Address:

Phone Numbers: Home: _____ Work: _____

Cell: _____ e-mail address: _____

Father's Name:

Residence Address: (if different from Mother's)

Phone Numbers: Home: _____ Work: _____

Cell: _____ e-mail address: _____

Please explain your interest in SWFLS:

A \$100.00 deposit is required at time of pre-registration pending enrollment acceptance. This does not guarantee admittance but will keep your name on our registration list in the order it is received. Deposit is refundable if you withdraw your name up until 7/1/05. Once the interview and registration begins deposit is not refundable.

Deposit: _____ Check: _____ Cash: _____