



White Pine-Hopes For Our Partnership

White Pine's identity as defined by our charter... calls us to the formation of our students as whole people. We hope that they will enter their next steps as patient, just, and involved young people who accept the task of transforming, for the better, the world in which they live.

Raising children and adolescents can be a turbulent time - raising them to be educated and prepared for the next steps at the elementary or to be college/career ready at the STEM Academy, but also compassionate, involved, and ethical is counter-cultural in today's world. At a time when both families and schools find themselves subjected to many pressures, the only path to success in this endeavor is a strong two-way partnership between the school and the parent. To quote Henry Ford - "Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success".

Each of the following points represents a shared hope for both the school and the parent in defining the characteristics of a healthy two-way partnership.

-The home and the school share the same goals for the student's formation.

RESPECT: *As a society, we struggle to create trusting and respectful interactions between individuals and institutions. We have grown accustomed to the impersonal nature of customer service. Every educator at White Pine and every parent is a committed individual who is fully invested in the formation of the student. This shared commitment requires mutual respect, decorum, patience, and dialogue, especially at moments of stress.*

COMMUNICATION: *The school will communicate by regular progress updates as well as individual outreach when significant concerns arise. Communication by families is critical to the school's success, first by the student (particularly the middle and high school years) who is encountering difficulties with a teacher/coach/moderator and then by the parent, directly to the individual involved in the situation. Neither the parent nor school can solve a problem unless we are made aware of it.*

TRANSPARENCY: *If the partnership between the student or family and school isn't working, we owe it to each other to raise the concern and to provide an opportunity for correction.*

CHANNELS: *We cannot navigate the problems of childhood/adolescence through the lens of our "outrage culture" or by taking personal issues to the public forum. No problem of any significance was ever solved through social media. We must use established channels and these channels must be responsive to issues that arise.*

-High and "counter-cultural" expectations are essential.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS: *Parents who enroll their child/adolescent have agreed to support the school's expectations. Those expectations are made clear and the school agrees to maintain them as a part of what makes its program unique. Children/adolescents tend to sink or rise to what is asked of them. While special circumstances may occur, our high expectations are generally fixed in place. Instead of lowering the bar, we hope to convey trust to students that they are capable of meeting our expectations and are supported and guided as they do so.*

OWNERSHIP: As students move through their years here at White Pine, we hope to provide mentoring to manage increasing independence. Educators commit to less “hand holding” as the student progresses. Parents acknowledge that the student will need to act independently when entering college and adult life. Encouraging students to solve their own problems is necessary and not neglectful on the part of the adults.

BOUNDARIES: Neuroscience research is clear about the harm done by drug and alcohol use, as well as the disruptive influence of unfettered technology use. It is essential that we set clear and specific rules around these influences; these are not areas for independence and experimentation.

-Effective communication places the student at the center.

BIASED INTERPRETATIONS: A student’s interpretation of events is often biased or ambiguous, and is interpreted through the emotional lens of childhood/adolescent development. Students bring home an incomplete interpretation of a school situation or convey a slanted version of the home environment at school. When confronted by a situation that doesn’t make sense, we will start by asking “what happened?” of the other adult party before jumping to conclusions. This practice keeps the best interests of the student at the center of the conversation and helps to maintain respectful dialogue focused on solving the issue.

HEROES: Students need adults who can function as heroes and role models. Our modern society has dismantled virtually any historical or modern individual to whom a student can look for inspiration. Educators cannot diminish the integrity of the parent. Likewise, parents must be careful not to demean or criticize the actions of an educator/coach/moderator in the presence of the student or in public forums. All of us, as adults, need to strive to act in ways that model character, integrity, and compassion.

-Setbacks provide growth opportunities.

STRESS: The educational experience is naturally challenging. As a school, White Pine commits to a strong and structured program of formation but cannot guarantee an experience that is free of obstacles, setbacks, errors, or disappointments. Together, we hope to help students manage their own stress, anxiety and setbacks and to find productive responses. We recognize as adults that we cannot allow ourselves to surrender to the same stresses if we are to support our students.

GROWTH MINDSET: Every student makes mistakes and falls short during their time in school. Most issues never become featured in the college application or follow them to careers. Together, we respond in a way that allows students to grow beyond errors. We hope to encourage a growth mindset in our students.

CHARACTER: A student’s transcript may get the student accepted into college but skills such as perseverance, self-advocacy, responsibility, curiosity, integrity, and motivation will allow a student to thrive. There are many shortcuts to building a college application but few shortcuts to developing character.

School is a developmental journey, not a simple transaction. Parents can expect to find themselves in wonder at the transformation of a child into a young adult. Educators are privileged to experience this transformation thousands of times throughout their years in education. Despite the roller coaster ride that lies ahead, the growth process is miraculous. Parents and educators take a leap of faith in believing that if we do the right thing, even when difficult, we will be offering our students tremendous gifts that will serve them throughout their lives. Our commitment to being different will make a difference for them.