

# **Watershed Parent Handbook**

## **2006-2007**

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## Overview

Located at 2344 Nicollet Avenue South in Minneapolis, Watershed serves students grades nine through twelve. The Youth Initiative with 12 students was initiated in 1996 by a group of City of Lakes Waldorf students who wished to continue their Waldorf education beyond middle school, and by parents and teachers who made the dream come true. The name was later changed to Watershed on the inspiration of one of the students who saw the school as a “watershed” in the turbulent times of adolescence in the 1990’s. Sponsored by the Adler Institute, in 2002 Watershed High became a **public charter school**. This means that it is now tuition-free. The Waldorf curriculum remains intact and the mission continues to be the education of young people toward freedom. Today the student body is comprised of adolescents from a variety of backgrounds who have made a single discovery: Watershed High School is an excellent environment in which to grow and learn.

Here at Watershed High School, our goal is to inspire creative thinking, not to force feed facts. We acknowledge the wholeness of each individual, and seek to create a community in which students can contribute to and benefit from the greater social whole. While Watershed High School does not, in fact, “mass produce” chief executive officers, a Waldorf education is an excellent preparation for CEOs and any number of other professions. That’s because a Waldorf education is preparation for life.

Graduates of Watershed High School have been accepted at the following institutions of higher learning: Bard College, Carleton College, The Eastman School of Music, Hampshire College, The Julliard School, Macalester College, North Carolina School of the Arts, Oberlin College, Randolph Macon Women’s College, Rice University, Roger Williams University, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, University of North Dakota, University of Washington, University of Wisconsin, Wellesley College, and Wesleyan University.

Today, the student body has grown appreciably to approximately 130 students and we remain committed to small class sizes in order to most effectively provide students with the unique Waldorf approach to education. The Waldorf educational model originated with Rudolf Steiner, an Austrian philosopher and scientist. Insisting upon a highly ambitious curriculum infused with arts, crafts, and a sense of ethics, Steiner established the first Waldorf school in 1919 for the children of employees at the Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart, Germany. Steiner’s unique approach to education has been called the “best-kept secret in education,” and today Waldorf schools number close to 600 in 30 countries worldwide. Watershed High School is one of more than 140 Waldorf schools in North America, one of four in the Twin Cities alone.

Individuality is at the very roots of the history of Waldorf schools. Just 20 years after Rudolf Steiner established the Stuttgart school in 1919, the Nazis closed it and six other Waldorf Schools. According to the state-run media, the government preferred schools to educate students for the state, not to think for themselves.

The students at Watershed High School are encouraged to be genuinely supportive of one another, thereby creating an atmosphere in which the gifts of each individual can emerge and be valued. In our deliberately small environment, every student is an honored student.

## Curriculum

The Waldorf curriculum is an organic whole, meeting the developmental phases of the student with techniques and subjects that are nourishment for the soul, bringing balance, wholeness, self-knowledge, and confidence. The goal is to nurture the free human being, eager to take his or her place in the world and ready to work to make it better.

The two words which best describe our curriculum are richness and choice. Students are given opportunities to mingle among grade levels and are allowed to fulfill a most basic need of adolescence--to have ownership over what they are doing.

Watershed High School curriculum is designed to provide a well-balanced environment for learning in which our students, while fully prepared to meet their future educational goals, are also inspired to enjoy learning throughout their lives. Academic requirements include the full complement of college preparatory subjects: science, social studies, math, English, and world languages. Additional credits beyond the requirements are offered in each discipline. Honors options are available to sophomores, juniors, and seniors in good academic standing.

### The art of self expression

*I look into the world  
wherein there shines the sun,  
wherein there gleam the stars,  
wherein there lie the stones.  
The plants live and grow,  
the animals feel and live,  
and I to spirit give a dwelling in  
my soul.*

*I look into the soul  
that living, dwells in me.  
The Creating Spirit lives and weaves  
in light of sun and soul.  
In heights of world without,  
in depths of soul within,  
to thee, Creating Spirit,  
I, seeking, turn myself;  
that strength and grace and skill  
for learning and for work  
in me may live and grow.*

*--Rudolf Steiner, founder of Waldorf Education*



## ***Watershed Parent Glossary***

### **Administrator:**

The school administrator is responsible for general administration, including the building, finances, and record keeping. The administrator works with the administration staff to do this.

### **All School Assemblies:**

These are all-grade student and faculty meetings to cover topics of interest to the entire student body. Generally, they occur at the class meeting time and are held on an “as needed” basis.

### **All-School Meetings:**

All school parent meetings occur each semester. Following a general meeting, parents meet separately by class with the class sponsor to discuss specific class concerns.

### **Art Opening:**

The Art Opening turns the whole school into a gallery. This fall event highlights student artwork and performance art for the entire community.

### **Bus Passes:**

All students at Watershed High School are eligible to receive MTC bus card privileges. To ensure that all students who need bus transportation receive it at no cost to them and to stay within Watershed’s limited transportation budget, certain parameters were defined for their use. Students will be briefed each fall (See the Student Handbook.)

### **Centerpoint:**

Pearson Centerpoint (formerly known as SiPS) is a web-based database available at <http://www.watershedhs.org> under “Login”. See attached notes on how to use Centerpoint. Other than parent/teacher conferences, this is the main communication channel for academic information.

### **Chairs Meeting:**

This is a monthly meeting among the Board chairs, Faculty chairs, Community Council chairs, and Administrator to coordinate the efforts of all governance groups and to facilitate communication.

### **Charter School:**

“Charter schools are designed and operated not by the local school district, but by groups of founders that includes parents, educators and community leaders. Founders must obtain a charter-the specific contractual authority to run the charter school-from an authorizing body established under state law. Some, but not all, of the public school funding follows the students enrolled in the charter school. Founders have a great deal of independence to decide the school's budget, staff, curriculum and teaching methods. In exchange for this independence,

charter schools must meet high accountability and academic performance standards, and must successfully manage school finances and operations. If charter schools don't perform, they are closed. That's greater accountability than is generally required of traditional public schools.” (Additional information is available at <http://www.centerforschoolchange.org/charter.htm>.) Watershed's sponsor is the Adler Institute.

### **Class meetings:**

Class meeting are scheduled for Friday afternoons for one period led by the school sponsors. See Class Sponsor below.

### **Class Reps:**

Class Reps are parent volunteers with a student in the particular class. Usually there are two class reps that are responsible to be liaisons between the parents of that class of students and Watershed faculty. They help develop community and foster healthy communication among the parents and teachers of Watershed High School at the class level, thereby supporting the students and their initiatives. Class Reps work closely as partners with the Class Sponsors. The Class Reps also help rally volunteer support from the parents for a number of school activities.

### **Class Sponsors:**

In the Waldorf tradition, Watershed has two class sponsors who will ideally stay with their class for the four years of high school. A class sponsor is responsible for the social concerns of the class and act as a parent liaison. The sponsors are advisors, mentors, and guides for the students and the primary contact for parents. The class sponsors convene weekly meetings with the class of students to nurture the social, academic and practical aspects of the class. They keep a finger on the pulse of the class dynamics, support fundraising for the class and make themselves available to students and parents. One of the characteristics of Waldorf education that sets it apart from other schools is the conscious way that the faculty “holds” the students. Class sponsors take their role in the students’ lives seriously and generally form strong bonds with their classes. Basically, this is a kind of “home room” teacher position.

### **Community Council:**

This is the parent/community member body of the school that supports parents, teachers, and students through communication, volunteer involvement, fundraising, and community building efforts. The Community Council is the primary opportunity for parents to organize and participate in support of school life, and all parents are encouraged to attend meetings. The Watershed Community Council (CC) was mandated by the Watershed High School (WHS) Board to do the following:

1. Support the mission of WHS.
2. Extend the WHS community beyond the school day to include parents, alumni, and the community at large.
3. Create a community gesture that will embrace and ensure the quality and essence of a Waldorf community.
4. Provide a voice and entry point for contribution to all community members.

Led by two parent co-chairs, the CC meets once a month and is open to all parents and faculty who wish to participate. In addition to parent members, the Administrator and one or both of the

Faculty Chairs regularly attends meetings and make reports. Other Faculty members report on an occasional and rotating basis.

**Community Service:**

Community Service at Watershed has traditionally been done in all-school service days, such as a school-wide food drive or a day of working at the Philadelphia Farm.

**Dean of Students:**

The Dean of Students is responsible for working with students, parents, and other teachers on student behavior or discipline issues. The objective of the Dean of Students is to challenge students to enhance their decision-making skills resulting in their discovery of social and personal meanings of responsibility and accountability. Understanding that learning is a life long process gained through success and failure, experiences familiar and unfamiliar. The Dean also counsels and advises students regarding their choices after Watershed High School including college, university and other post secondary options.

**Enchanted Evening:**

Watershed senior class hosts this evening for young children as an alternative to the traditional Halloween haunted house. The students create a script and decorate the school for an “enchanted evening.” This is also a fundraiser for the senior class trip.

**Faculty/Staff:**

Faculty co-chairs provide day-to-day educational leadership at Watershed. They convene and lead weekly faculty meetings, where faculty defines the pedagogy and set curriculum standards, etc.

**Graduation:**

Watershed graduation is a community event open to all grades, alumni, and their families and friends. Following graduation is a reception for all. Students wear their own best clothes, not traditional caps and graduation gowns. There is a valedictorian speech and other graduates usually have time to speak as well.

**Main Lesson/Morning Lesson:**

The first class of the day is referred to as Morning Lesson and currently lasts all morning until lunch. This class is divided into four main sections: 1) movement 2) centering 3) lecture 4) project work. This class is presented in “blocks” which change every half semester. Blocks are delivered using an interdisciplinary approach.

**Medieval Feast:**

This dinner theater presented by Watershed Students with the support of Watershed parent volunteers “in the kitchen.” Students perform a medieval themed play and as court jesters, build sets and props, create costumes, serve guests their food, and perform in the gypsy camp. This

is an annual fundraiser and community-building event, showcasing the creative Watershed spirit.

**Mission:**

Watershed's mission is to nurture the intellect, stimulate the will, and embrace the creative potential of youth in a balanced environment that engenders reverence, respect, and responsibility for nature and the needs of others.

**Open "Mic":**

This is a periodic weekday evening event driven by the students, with a faculty advisor, to highlight students' developing artistic, performance skills. All students are invited.

**Parent/Teacher Conferences:**

Students are invited to attend these conferences. Meeting with the teachers is essential to supporting your student's progress and making a difference while there is still time to do before the end of the grade period.

**Principal:**

Watershed does not have a principal. Instead, depending on your need, contact the following:

- Administrator – financials, budget, fundraising, etc. or attendance issues
- Faculty co-chairs – for curriculum questions, issues with other teachers, etc.
- Dean of Students – for student discipline or behavior problems
- Class Sponsors – for grade specific information, such as how the student is developing socially, overall goals, etc.
- Registrar – for grades, credit questions, transcripts, etc.

**Prom:**

Typically scheduled in May, this is an all-grades event. Student purchase tickets and may bring one guest who is not a Watershed student. It is usually held in the spring and is planned by the Junior Class students under the guidance of their Class Sponsor. Since its inception in 1995, Watershed High School has had a spring prom. The junior class hosts the prom as well as decides on a theme and location. One year the prom was held on a boat in Lake Minnetonka, another year it was held at the 510 Club in Minneapolis, and last year (2004-05) it was held in the newly renovated Watershed High School. Typically the prom starts at 8 p.m. and goes until 11 p.m. Any proceeds go toward the junior class' senior trip fund.

**Restorative Justice:**

Restorative justice is the concept that a "wrong" needs to be "made up" to the whole community – that the community must be "restored" to its "pre-wronged" condition. This happens when community members tell the offender how his/her behavior affected them and/or the group and the offender attempts to make things "right." This dialogue occurs in "circles" of teachers and

students who were present when an infraction or situation occurred. Watershed philosophy is that every student has the potential to be a contributing member of the community and must be given opportunities to do so.

### **Senior Class Play:**

All seniors participate in producing a senior class play, which usually is scheduled just prior to the senior class trip in the evening for all community members to attend. A small charge at the door helps cover the cost of the play. Refreshments are available at the intermission. Proceeds help pay the cost of props, costumes, etc. for the play and also subsidize the class trip.

### **Senior Class Projects:**

A graduation requirement at Watershed is completion of a Senior Project that is the culmination of the last year's work. The student works with a faculty advisor and an adult mentor and must produce three deliverables including: 1) a detailed written proposal 2) public presentation and 3) a 7 – 10 page paper (outline is provided). Each phase of the project has well-defined criteria/outline and each piece is graded.

### **Senior Presentations:**

These public presentations are the culmination of the Senior Project work and last over several days. Each senior takes approximately 15-20 minutes. The Junior Class sells dinner from 5:30 – 6:30 as a junior class fundraiser and presentations start at 6:30 PM. All the community is encouraged to come.

### **Senior Trip:**

A celebratory event just prior to graduation for seniors chaperoned by their class sponsors to the Clubhouse, a lodge at Lake Itasca State Park. The trip is paid for from class funds raised from fundraising, such as Silent Auction, and a per-student fee. Faculty and/or students usually drive. Watershed needs written permission for a student to drive or for a student to drive in another student's car. Sleeping is on cots with sleeping bags and the students will cook their own food and share in other chores while on the trip.

### **Silent Auction:**

The WHS Silent Auction is an annual fund-raising event put on by the 10<sup>th</sup> grade community: students, parents, families and friends. It is a festive party gathering with a reputation for good music, good food, and entertainment. A wide variety of items are auctioned. Art and other desirables are set out on tables for perusal and bidding. Other offerings include services, such as babysitting, massage, or carpentry. Professional expertise might include offerings such as leading a discussion group in a gathering of friends. Weekends at a cabin, and even a week in a Paris apartment have also been up for bid in the past. This fund-raiser contributes to WHS' operating budget, with a percentage going to the 10th grade class for field trips and their senior class trip. The Silent Auction is a social event for the entire WHS community.

### **SiPS:**

See Centerpoint.

**Snippets:**

*Snippets* is the faculty and parent weekly newsletter. Materials to be included in each week's *Snippets* are due to the editor each Wednesday at noon. *Snippets* archives are available on the school web site.

**Sports:**

Watershed students participate in organized sports and compete with other schools. There is soccer in the fall, basketball in the winter, and ultimate Frisbee in the spring. There are no tryouts. The philosophy is to have fun, no matter your physical ability. Traditionally team sports are co-ed.

**Student Council:**

This is an excellent opportunity for students to work together across grades and to practice their leadership skills guided by a faculty advisor.

**Summer School:**

In Minnesota, a student's home district allows students to enroll in summer school courses, so that is your resource, since Watershed cannot offer a summer school program. When registering, it will be important to look over your student's report cards for this year (and maybe other years as well) to see what courses need to be repeated. Register for classes that cover the same subject area as those courses, so if it is an English class, register for English; if history or social studies, register for history or social studies, etc. Upon completion of the summer school course, have the school send a transcript to Watershed so that the credits can be transferred into our system. It is vital for parents to support them in making up those credits.

**Traditional Arts:**

Traditional Arts, also called crafts are used in daily life rather than hung in museums. Examples include clay vessels, basket making, weaving, bookbinding, and clothing with beadwork. The technique must be learned and its quality is grounded in whether it is usable. The object expresses the maker's relationship to the world with attention to design and beauty. Traditional in this sense refers to indigenous, earth honoring cultures, with roots that go back to pre-industrial times.

**Waldorf Education:**

This is an educational system developed by Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner. In 1919, the first free Waldorf school was founded in Stuttgart at the initiative of Emil Molt, CEO of the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory. The school became the model for the Waldorf movement, leading to the building and development of (by 2004) some 1,600 Waldorf Kindergartens and over 870 Waldorf or Rudolf Steiner schools world wide, offering educational activities from early childhood through high school and in some cases, programs for adults.

**Watershed School Board:**

The Watershed School Board, per Charter rules is comprised of seven faculty/staff and five parents/community members. They meet monthly on Thursday evenings. Board members' contact information will be published in the School Directory.

## **WHS Pearson Centerpoint Parent Quick Reference**



**Logging In:** From the WHS Website: [www.watershedhs.org](http://www.watershedhs.org) Click on Login. On the login screen, enter your username and password and click the “login” button.

**Personal Home Page:** After you log in, you will see your student’s personal home page listing their courses, grades, key events, announcements, and links to attendance and other information, etc. Like all pages on the application site, the home page is divided into a header, a main body section, and a footer.

**Menu Bar:** Located at the bottom of the page header area, below the blue Watershed High School banner, the menu bar displays drop down menus as you pass the cursor over individual tabs. It provides direct access to all available application functions and is displayed on all pages in one form or another.

**Site Path:** Located in the center of the header area under the words “Watershed Charter School”, the Site Path references the page being viewed in a logical hierarchy relative to the home page. Components of the hierarchy are “hot” and can be clicked to navigate to related pages and functions.

**Viewing Attendance:** To view your student’s attendance for the current term, move the cursor over the “Attendance” tab on the Menu Bar and click on “View Attendance”. You can view attendance records for other terms by selecting a term in the dropdown menu box at the bottom of the page body.

**Calendar:** Calendar events are listed on the home page. To view events in a calendar format click the “more” button, or move the cursor over the “Communications” tab on the Menu Bar and click on “View Calendar”. Using the drop down menu at the top of the calendar body section, you may narrow the view selection to school events, course events, or group events your child is part of. The calendar displays different event selections corresponding to your context as referenced by the Site Path.

**To Do List:** Parents can view tasks in their student’s To Do list, which is generated by the teachers of their courses. Disregard the phrase “no tasks in to do list” and click the “More” button. Only current and future tasks are displayed. Once the due date has passed, the task disappears from the list. The To Do list displays items to your context as referenced by the Site Path.

**Course Listing:** Parents can view their child's list of current term courses. The course list is one of the standard items in the body of the main home page. By clicking on the name of the course, parents can view the Class Home page. A detailed course listing is available by clicking the "More" button by the Course list on the student home page or by clicking 'classes' in the site path. *Note: All ML courses for the semester are listed. Students are only enrolled in one ML block at a time.*

**Announcements:** Announcements will be displayed according to context (where you are in the site path). At **site path: home**, you will view school/campus announcements, if the site path displays a course number, you will see announcements for that course.

**Viewing Grades:** The Grade book listing on the personal home page displays the overall grade for each course in which your student is enrolled. To see more detail, including individual graded assignments, click on the letter grade for that course. Grade book details can also be accessed from the Menu Bar by moving the cursor over the "Grade Book" tab and clicking on the course name or "view grades"(in the context of the class home page),

**Class Home Page:** To see a Class Home Page, click on the underlined course name on the main home page. Class home pages may also be accessed by moving the cursor over the "My Classes" tab on the Menu Bar and clicking on the course name. The information on the Class Home Page pertains only to that class and may include assignments and course documents.

**Class Assignments:** By clicking on the "More" button to the right of Class Assignments, you can review more detailed information. Only assignments with current and future due dates are displayed. Once the due date has passed, the assignment disappears from the list. To see the grade for an assignment, see the gradebook.

**Class Documents:** To download documents, click on the More button to the right of Class Documents, or simply click on a folder in which the document is located, then click on the download image or document name. You can open the document or save it to disk. *Hardcopies of these documents are handed out once in class.*

**Groups:** To view class groups to which your student has been assigned, move the cursor over the "My Groups" tab on the Menu Bar and click on the group name (if any).. This will take you to the group home page. Group home pages are similar to class home pages in layout and function. Parents have limited access and functionality within group home pages.

**Message Center:** Parent Users can receive and post messages to and from their children and to and from their children's current teachers. If a user has unread messages, a message notice will be displayed at the bottom of the page. Click on the message notice to view the new messages. To access the message center, move the

cursor over the “Communications” tab on the Menu Bar and again over “Message Center” sub-menu tab and click on the desired function.. The Message Center should be your first choice of communication with teachers , before email and phone.

**Message Center Preferences:** Some announcements and personal messages may be sent to and received by parents and students via email as well as being posted online.. To set your preferences on receiving email messages, move the cursor over the “Communications” tab on the Menu Bar and again over “Message Center” sub-menu tab and click on “Edit Preferences”. It is recommended that you specify always receiving messages by email so that you may be alerted of important news in two different ways.

### **Switching Students:**

**Other Personal Settings and Options:** By moving the cursor over the “Personal” tab on the Menu Bar you can click on the following options.

**Change My Password** (change password)

**Edit Display Thresholds** (display more or fewer calendar events, To Dos/Assignments, and or Announcements in the page body. This may also be accessed by clicking the “Edit” link under the Personal Calendar in the main Home Page.)

**Change Notification Settings** (enter email address(es) and specify frequency of or thresholds for automatic student progress reports and alerts notifying you of low grades, missing assignments, and absences or tardies.

**Log Out:** Always remember to log out after your session is finished by clicking the Logout link in the lower right corner of the page footer at the bottom of the page.

**Forget Your Password?** Call the office. We cannot retrieve your old password, but we can give you a new one of your own choosing.

**Problems?** Please call the office with questions 612.871.4363.

