

Hello!

Below you will find necessary information to introduce you to the educational model utilized at WIDE. We are a non-traditional school. Having knowledge about project-based learning and the Reggio Emilia philosophy will make our chat, and your subsequent in-person tour, much more meaningful. Our world is much different than it was when we were growing up. Precisely because most of us grew up in a traditional model of education, it is incredibly important for parents to educate themselves. Understanding innovative ways of education does require time and effort on the part of the parent to really understand these shifts and how they can benefit your child.

It is important to know that *our school absolutely covers* state standards for Kinder thru High School and preschoolers are taught letters, shapes, numbers, etc. There is an inherent benefit of a child attending a preschool that has an on-campus elementary school. Our preschool teachers know what schools are looking for to be "kindergarten ready". At most schools, the children are taught information the state mandates or for pre-school the all important "kindergarten ready" check list - nothing less but commonly nothing more. However, the beautiful part of our educational experience lies beyond the check list of state standards and "things to know". At WIDE, there is space reserved for the children to question, wonder, create, collaborate, initiate, critically think about the world around them and so much more. Children at WIDE are given the time and space to explore and learn far beyond the limitations of those set standards. *It is important to understand that the freedom in our school lies in the fluid movement of the learning and not that any child has the option not to learn.* Quite the contrary, we have continually experienced that children have much higher internal motivation when they view the work they are doing as meaningful. Additionally, the development of soft skills is just as important as academic content. Project based learning naturally lends itself to offering the children with rich opportunities to use, learn and practice soft skills.

Once you have had a chance to review the below information, please circle back with me and we can set up a time to chat about any questions you may have. Afterwards, you can set up a brief in-person tour.

Please review the following 4 sections of information and there are a couple of wonderful books to add to your book list if you are so inclined.

1. Reading the descriptions and seeing the photos of the last 20 or so posts on our Instagram will also give you a great snapshot into the culture of our school.
 - IG for WIDE school classrooms
<https://instagram.com/thewideschool?igshid=6leb7iupanyh>
 - IG for Yellow House Atelier - our in house creative team of educators that support all the classes (infant thru High school)
https://instagram.com/yellow_house_atelier?igshid=qwnacsbe6d4o

2. Links to better understand the Reggio Emilia approach to learning:
 - <http://www.thewideschool.com/project-based-learning>
 - <http://www.thewideschool.com/the-arts>
 - <http://www.thewideschool.com/the-theory-of-loose-parts>
 - <http://www.thewideschool.com/wide-preschool-infants-through-age-5>

3. **Presentation of Knowledge** - every year our Pre-K through Middle school students use their major project work in class to create a Presentation of Knowledge. The link below is for our Pre-K group and it is very representative of how projects drive the educational experiences at WIDE. Enjoy!
 - <https://youtu.be/P9568VDbat4>

4. Wonderful quick read!! The need for a global shift in education towards competency and a strong 21st century skill set:
 - <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomvanderark/2020/01/21/show-what-you-know-a-parents-guide-to-the-global-shift-to-competency/?sh=3f8fc0467d94>

READ BELOW IF YOU WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE FUTURE PROJECTION OF PROJECT BASED LEARNING INTO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND BEYOND, please refer to the following links:

1. K-12 digital platform we use, "Altitude Learning", to promote learner centered experiences while tracking mastery and competency based goals
 - <http://www.thewideschool.com/wide-school-elementary-program>
 - <https://www.altitudelearning.com/>
2. Our High School experience, Big Picture Learning and the future of High School transcripts
 - <https://www.bigpicture.org/apps/pages/10Distinguishers>
 - <https://mastery.org/>
3. **Great quick read! The need for a global shift in education towards competency and a strong 21st century skill set:**
 - <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomvanderark/2020/01/21/show-what-you-know-a-parents-guide-to-the-global-shift-to-competency/?sh=3f8fc0467d94>
4. Testing - The state of Texas utilizes the STAAR test which measures parents if a student is on grade level. Being a private school, we do not receive any funding from the state, so our students do not need to pass the STAAR test to advance to the next grade level. We carefully selected a test that many states use and it gives us far more useful information than if a student is on grade level or not. Our students do participate in taking the MAP test in the Fall and Spring. This test is purely used as one of many assessments and for the children to have exposure to standardized testing. It is an online adaptive test that "maps" the student's understanding of academic content, even if

it is outside their grade level and then curates a “map” of their level of mastery of academic content across all grade levels. It is important to note that our students do not spend weeks preparing for this test; we believe this is counterproductive to obtaining a true assessment of knowledge. We believe that cultivating an authentic learning experience steeped in using creativity, critical thinking and collaboration will naturally result in our students being well prepared for their future. We cannot emphasize enough that the MAP test is only 1 of many assessments the team of WIDE educators utilizes. Please read more about the MAP test at:

- <https://www.nwea.org/the-map-suite/>

Two books we highly recommend are:

1. https://www.amazon.com/What-School-Could-Be-Inspiration/dp/057850443X/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=what+school+could+be&qid=1616515642&sr=8-1
2. https://www.amazon.com/Learner-Centered-Innovation-Curiosity-Passion-Unleash/dp/1948334003/ref=sr_1_1?crid=2EO4NF2EI20BS&dchild=1&keywords=learner+centered+innovation&qid=1616515707&sprefix=learner+centered%2Caps%2C215&sr=8-1

We do appreciate this is a hefty amount of information to process. We are here to help you along the way. We all want the best education for our children. In today's world the definition of “the best education” that we grew up with, is certainly being challenged; and with good reason.

Reading through this material will allow our time together, whether it is over the phone or in-person, to be much more meaningful. After you have reviewed this information, if you feel our educational model is what you are looking for then please reach out when you are available to chat!

Warmly,
Cheryl