



Wildflower School

SCHOOL DISTRICT 8 (KOOTENAY LAKE)

SCHOOL HANDBOOK

WILDFLOWER SCHOOL, NELSON AND CRESTON

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School District 8
Kootenay Lake

Table of Contents

Wildflower School Mission Statement	3
Wildflower School History	3
Wildflower School Key Principles and Values.....	3
Curriculum and Assessment	4
Home Learning.....	4
Communicating About Learning	5
Expectations of Students	5
Expectations of Parents	6
Expectations of Staff.....	7
Communication	7
Wildflower School Code of Conduct:.....	7
Responding to Challenging Behaviour	7
School Supply Fees	8
Wildflower School Daily Schedules.....	8
Wildflower School Annual Calendar	9
Wildflower School Admission Policy.....	10
Policy.....	10
Rationale.....	10
Procedures for General Admission	10
Additional Procedures for Wildflower Middle School.....	10
Procedures for Changing Classes.....	11
Wildflower School Code of Conduct.....	13
Mission Statement.....	13
Statement of Purpose/Rationale.....	13
Inclusion.....	13
Conduct Expectations	13
Expectations for Students.....	13
Unacceptable Conduct	14
Problem Solving (Consequences)	14

Notification	15
Retaliation Prevention	15
Conflict Resolution Policy	16
Policy.....	16
Rationale.....	16
Definition	16
Procedures.....	16

Wildflower School Mission Statement

Our learning community focuses on educating the whole child: we encourage social, emotional, spiritual, physical and intellectual growth.

Our multi-age learning environment is one of support, safety, trust, respect and compassion.

Our academic delivery invites students to grow and achieve their personal best through ongoing goal setting and reflection in a non-competitive learning environment.

Wildflower School History

The Wildflower program was envisioned in 2001 by a group of homeschooling parents and Liz Tanner, a teacher with an extensive multi-aged teaching background who had been teaching in the independent school system.

In 2003 School District 8 suggested a partnership in which the class could exist alongside other district elementary schools as an alternative to mainstream classroom settings. A long waiting list formed, and successive elementary classrooms were added between 2004 and 2012, including a Middle School classroom for children aged twelve to fifteen and a satellite campus in Creston, BC.

It is important to note that we would not be where we are today without the passion and tenacity of each person who has contributed their time and energy to our school. From the school's inception, parents have been essential partners with our school staff and the surrounding community.

Wildflower School Key Principles and Values

Each classroom at Wildflower School is multi-aged. Elementary classrooms consist of students between the ages of six and twelve. The Middle School classroom consists of students between the ages of twelve and fifteen. We endeavour to enroll children that span the entire age spectrum in each classroom. This is to encourage the healthy interactions that naturally flow from children who are placed in a family type structure.

We value community. We endorse the basic principle that school must be a safe place to learn and to grow. The diversity of ages encourages interactive and interdependent learning. Students are taught to appreciate differences and celebrate successes. Each child is supported to do his or her best and to bring out the best in others in a non-competitive classroom environment.

We emphasize opportunities for cooperative learning and social activities such as participating in activities that foster class and school community such as potlucks, camping trips and field trips.

We value healthy relationships and believe they are of core importance to a teacher's ability to address a child's social, emotional, spiritual, physical and intellectual growth. We manifest this belief with a classroom configuration that keeps a child with one teacher for their elementary years. This way the child and teacher can build a healthy attachment based on trust, understanding and mutual respect; in doing so the learning journey is enhanced for both teacher and student.

Family is an integral part of our school community. Our school week consists of four days of classroom instruction and one day of home-learning. By facilitating 5.5 hours a week of their child's learning, parents

become deeply involved in their child's progress. Parent involvement is also evident in the school, the classroom, and in community-building activities.

Curriculum and Assessment

Wildflower School curriculum follows the Learning Outcomes required by the BC Ministry of Education. Each teacher develops a broad year-long theme for his or her class. Through the lens of this theme, Learning Outcomes are delivered cross-circularly. This allows for deeper learning to occur through inquiry and project-based learning.

A multi-age environment provides the opportunity to deliver these Learning Outcomes over a number of years. Therefore, one cannot assume that any given year will contain all of the outcomes for a specific grade. Rather a child may receive lessons in Science from the Grade Six curriculum and Social Studies lessons from Grade Four. What will always be true is that your child's teacher will strive to prepare material that works for the full spectrum of ages in the room.

During the first weeks of school, Wildflower teachers assess each student's academic and social skills. This involves observing children as they complete learning tasks and interact with peers, thus allowing a teacher to look for each child's strategies and strengths. In so doing, the teacher is provided with a window into how each child learns best.

Once the level of competency for each child is understood, the teacher is on the path to assist students in their continuous progress. With respect for what the child already knows and needs to learn, the teacher begins to move her or him forward from whatever starting point is correct for that child. This is done without the usual arbitrary lines that assume a child to be ready for a curriculum designed for one grade only. Some children make enormous strides while others are able to take small steps. We believe in authentic assessment and qualitative reporting to parents with an emphasis on individual growth and needs without comparison to others.

Home Learning

When explaining curriculum, it is important to note the home-learning element of Wildflower School. The school week runs Monday – Thursday, leaving one day a week for home learning activities. Although families are not expected to fulfill this responsibility solely on Fridays, it is expected that each student will receive approximately 5 ½ hours of home instruction per week: approximately 20% of their child's education.

The individualized home-learning program allows for a high degree of individualization to meet the learning needs of each child. It also allows families to capitalize on the unique resources a family can bring into their child's learning experience. Furthermore, the collaborative planning that parents are involved in with their child's teacher supports and enhances our values around learning in community.

The initial home-learning plan is co-created by you and your child's teacher in the fall of each school year. This plan is revisited regularly throughout the school year to ensure that the goals and plan are continuing to meet your child's individual learning needs. Teachers support families with instructional ideas and, on occasion, supplementary resources. Parents are expected to actively support their child to ensure the home-learning plan is implemented and that the outlined goals are being met. For formalized reporting purposes, your child's teacher is responsible for assessing your child's progress.

Communicating About Learning

Student progress is supported with anecdotal comments and suggestions from his or her teacher. The emphasis is always on striving for personal bests rather than in comparison to others.

To meet provincial requirements, letter grades for intermediate children are kept in the student files in the office. These files are open to parents on request. The report cards given to parents are personalized and address the whole child. Student progress in each area of school life is explained. The anecdotal report will address the following:

- This is what your child can do now....
- A next step for your child's learning is....
- Here are some strategies your child is/may begin using to get there....

When extra effort is required to strengthen a child's growth, school plans and home support suggestions will be described.

Individualized formal conferences to talk about your child's progress are in November and March. It is expected that all parents attend. Additional meetings are often set for homeschooling conversations. You can also expect ongoing informal communication such as emails, telephone calls, and face to face conversations as well. Parents are welcome to set up appointments with their teacher and the school Principal at any time.

Expectations of Students

Students are expected to contribute positively to the Wildflower School community. The culture that surrounds them at school is one of courtesy, curiosity, kindness, and respect.

The Wildflower community recognizes the impact that each person has on this whole; therefore, students are expected to behave in ways that enhance the classroom community and refrain from activities that detract from community.

Children are expected to speak respectfully and honour individual differences. They are asked to come to school ready to learn and be involved with each other in supportive and inclusive ways. They are expected to heed the adults charged with their care as well as be mindful to include all children.

Children are expected to show good stewardship: they will be mindful of their physical environment and take care to use resources without waste. This includes keeping their school tidy.

We believe in the power of play for building interpersonal relations and helping children grow in a myriad of ways. Children are encouraged to engage in peaceful, creative, and inclusive play. We emphasize inclusion and emotional safety; therefore, violent themes are not allowed. This extends to Halloween costumes and literature brought to school. Wrestling and "play" fighting are not allowed as the spirit of such play may foster real anger or injuries.

The Wildflower School community strives to provide a learning environment unique from the media-driven culture that surrounds our lives. Time at school is for healthy interactions. The presence of electronic devices or commercial collectibles often detracts from the kind of play and social interaction that we

promote at school. Therefore, we ask that electronic games, ipods, cell phones, trading cards, and all their relatives stay at home unless deemed appropriate by school staff.

Children who use technology as part of their individualized learning program may bring their personal electronic device to school based on their teacher's approval and supervision at all times. While on school premises before and after school and during recess and lunch breaks students are not permitted to use their personal electronic devices unless they have received permission from their teacher or the school principal.

Expectations of Parents

It is essential that parents joining the Wildflower School community embrace the opportunities and values within our educational program. Staff and parents are asked to work collaboratively to achieve optimum benefits for all our stakeholders.

Our school program is most effective when parents clearly communicate to children their respect for our staff and what they are focusing on to accomplish. It is expected that parents will support their children in all aspects of our learning community.

Parents' vital roles are three-fold:

- Provider of the basic needs for their child to be ready to learn at school
- Home educator
- Active and positive member of the Wildflower School community

Sending your child to school well fed and well rested with a hearty, healthy lunch is crucial to contributing to your child's daily ability to learn. In addition, honouring the intent and helping your child to comply with the Expectations of Students supports our school learning community.

If your child is unwell or your family will be away, please inform your classroom teacher and the school secretary.

We also ask that children arrive on time each day knowing how and with whom they will be going home. Coming to school late makes it difficult for children to feel fully a part of the school community. It also interrupts the flow of the class. In addition, teachers find that when children are unsure of their after-school arrangements they are often distracted and uneasy with anxiety building as the day progresses.

Finally, please let your child's teacher know if there are big changes happening at home. The effects often show up at school and we are better prepared to support your child if we have some insight into the situation.

Life in the classroom is enriched by parent participation. It is expected that most parents will find a way to help. We ask that parents talk to the teachers to learn about the variety of ways to contribute. One avenue is to be involved with the Parent Advisory Council (PAC). Experience teaches us that parent support is no frill, it is essential. A truly holistic education entails families supporting our school with their honourable intentions, their presence, and their heartfelt commitment.

Expectations of Staff

Wildflower School staff endeavor to create an atmosphere of trust, safety and compassion for all stakeholders. This in turn gives all members the opportunity to reflect, grow and learn. The school and individual classroom communities require that all its members work together to ensure that each child finds his or her place in the mosaic. By valuing each person's unique contribution to the school community, mutual trust, care and respect is fostered.

Communication

Wildflower staff value frequent and ongoing communication. Regular, informal conversation about your child's progress can be expected. Please respect the process by responding promptly to any queries that come up in notes home.

If a parent has a school concern, they must first have the necessary conversation directly with their child's teacher. It can be damaging to the parent-teacher relationship and therefore to the child's school experience if complaints are aired outside of what should be a bond of trust. If the teacher or the parent believe that there continue to be barriers to good communication or problem solving after honest attempts, they are asked to involve the Principal. Every attempt will be made to resolve the conflict respectfully.

Wildflower School Code of Conduct:

"Care for Self, Care for Others, Care for the Environment"

At Wildflower School we believe that all stakeholders have the right to learn in a safe, caring and orderly environment. Our expectation is that students and all adults, including guests at our school, will maintain an attitude of courtesy, cooperation and respect.

Responding to Challenging Behaviour

When responding to behaviour that does not meet Wildflower School's values or Code of Conduct, Wildflower School staff is committed to consequences that uphold connections and sense of belonging. Most situations are handled within the classroom communities using strategies consistent with the principles of Restorative Justice, Restitution, Compassionate Communication and Attachment Theory as presented by Gordon Neufeld.

For situations that are unable to be resolved at the classroom level, teachers invite parents to help resolve the situation in the interest of their child. The Principal is informed and invited into the process as needed. In those rare situations that cannot be resolved with the support of the parents and School staff, decisions about Wildflower School's ability to meet the needs of the child will ensue. Options will be explored – one option may include the recommendation that the parents find another learning environment for their child.

School Supply Fees

Wildflower School is responsible for the provision of all learning resources for students. Learning resources include items such as workbooks, textbooks and PE equipment.

Each classroom teacher purchases all consumable materials such as pencils, paper, and art supplies; this ensures that students have materials of equal quality and quantity. There may also be an activity fee added. The total fees for classroom consumable materials and activity fees are as follows:

\$50 - 85 for each elementary aged child

\$100 for each middle school aged child

Families will be advised of the fees owing in August or September of each year. These fees are subject to change on approval from the SD8 School Board. In extraordinary cases where the financial circumstances of a family warrant, the student fee may be reduced or waived. Please see the Principal if you wish to request this consideration.

Wildflower School Daily Schedules

The Wildflower School weekly schedule is one of the many unique features responsible for the program's success. Children attend class four days each week (Monday through Thursday). Each Friday is a home-learning day that is facilitated by the child's parent(s). Fully 20% of a child's educational program is supported directly by parents.

In addition, the length of time students are in class each day is longer than in other school settings. Typically, a Wildflower School student will receive approximately 20-30 minutes more instruction each day. This "extra time" accumulates throughout the year and results in extensions to the winter and summer vacations as well as some days used by the teachers for student led conferences and reporting.

	Elementary Nelson	Middle School Nelson	Seedlings Nelson	Creston
Start Time	8:30	8:30	8:30	8:30
Break	10:30	10:30	10:00	10:10
Back in Session	10:45	10:45	10:15	10:30
Lunch	12:35	12:15	12:00	12:30
Back in Session	1:15	12:45	12:30	1:10
End of Day	2:55	3:00	2:50	3:00

Each day will contain whole group instruction, cooperative activities and independent work. We strive to offer a variety of situations that address the learning styles of all students. Physical play and social growth opportunities are offered in conjunction with academic curriculum.

Wildflower School Annual Calendar

Each year, Wildflower School staff develop an annual calendar which is substantially different from other schools. This annual calendar is submitted to the Board of Education for approval. Any questions about the process should be directed to the school Principal.

You can view the calendars at https://www.sd8.bc.ca/calendar_downloads

It is additionally expected that you will provide the equivalent of 35 days of home schooling for your children.

Wildflower School Admission Policy

Updated September 2022

Policy

It is the policy of Wildflower School to provide opportunities for parents, teachers, and administration to work together to determine appropriate classroom admission placements for Wildflower students and uphold the two basic tenets of the school which are as follows:

- educate the whole child in a safe, supportive, and compassionate environment
- ensure the well-being of each classroom community

Rationale

On occasion, the number of requests for admission into a Wildflower class is greater than the available space in the class. In addition, it is sometimes necessary to consider moving students to better meet their educational needs and/or to ensure that as many students as possible are provided with seats and all the classes are filled. A process is required to ensure fair and equitable admission criteria.

Procedures for General Admission

Parents may indicate their interest in our school by filling out the form at <https://wildflower.sd8.bc.ca/about/interested>. The information is recorded on the contact list by birth year and gender. We will renew this list on an annual basis to help keep the list current and relevant as spaces come available in our school. Further information may be requested (particularly the Statement of Interest on the same page) when the child is of school age.

For admission into any class, the list is used to identify children to be considered for a seat in the class, based on age and gender appropriate to the space available. Siblings of current students may be given priority in placement.

If a placement is offered, but the parent(s) declines the seat, the parent may reapply for a future admission date.

In the case of a declined seat, another child on the list will be considered for the seat.

In the case of a seat opening up during the school year, the Principal, in consultation with the teacher, will determine whether the seat will be filled. In the event that the seat will be filled, the policy outlined above will apply to the selection of the next person to be considered for the seat.

Additional Procedures for Wildflower Middle School

These apply alongside the Wildflower policy as outlined above. Where they are at a variance, these guidelines will serve for the middle school age group only. Children currently enrolled in the Wildflower elementary program will be the first to be considered and may have priority over children from other schools and programs.

Parents of Grade 5 Wildflower children will receive a letter with the final report card each year. This letter will advise that it is necessary to refresh a Statement of Interest. This should be done by the end of January of their grade six year.

Should it be necessary, due to high enrolment requests within the program, the earliest date stamped Statement of Interest and/or registration and/or transfer request may be considered first.

In extraordinary circumstances a Wildflower parent may request a deferment for one year for their child to spend their grade seven year in the elementary program. A committee will consider the request.

Statements of Interest are accepted and encouraged from the parents of intermediate students from other schools and programs.

A Wildflower student who chooses to enroll in another school for the grade 6 year will be required to reapply to Wildflower Middle School for possible consideration for grade 7.

An entrance committee will be set each year to make the difficult decisions. The committee will consist of a minimum of two teachers and the Principal.

Procedures for Changing Classes

A parent with a child in one Wildflower class may request a move of the child into another class. This request is to be done by February 15th of the current school year and to follow this process:

The parents should first speak with the teachers involved.

The parent(s) should write a letter explaining the reasons for the request and submit it to the Principal with copies to each of the teachers involved in the request.

The request is then discussed with the parent, the teachers, and the Principal.

The teachers and the Principal will decide whether to grant the request.

If the request is granted and the seat is available, the parents and the teachers will devise a transition plan for the child.

If the request is granted and there is no available seat, the child's name may remain in their class until a seat becomes available in the requested class.

The Principal may also request that children be assigned to other classes at any time when the sustainability of the school is at risk. In this case, it may be necessary to move a child from one class to another in order to fill that class. This will then make space in another class into which students on the contact list may be placed according to the process described in the Procedures for General Admission. To do so, the administration will ensure the following process:

Following the dictates of this policy related to the contact list, the Principal will contact people to determine which, if any, are willing to send their child(ren) to the school at that time.

If there are people willing to move into the school, the Principal will meet with the teachers to determine the names of those students whose needs would be well met by another class in the school. The discussion will focus on the social and academic needs of the children, and from that discussion, recommendations will be made as to which students should be considered for the move.

The parents/guardians of the students identified for a possible change in classes will be contacted and asked to meet with the teachers and Principal to describe the situation and discuss the needs of the school at that time.

After the situation is described and general questions are answered, an opportunity will be provided for each of the parents of the children identified as candidates for a move into another class to meet with each of the teachers affected by the proposed change to hear the rationale for moving their child.

At the end of this phase, the parents may agree to willingly move their child(ren) into another class in which case concerns of the Principal are addressed.

In the event that a parent is unwilling to agree to move their child to another class, the administration reserves the right to move the child to ensure the long-term viability of Wildflower School.

Wildflower School Code of Conduct

Adopted February 2014

Mission Statement

Our learning community focuses on educating the whole child: we encourage social, emotional, spiritual, physical and intellectual growth.

Our multi-age learning environment is one of support, safety, trust, respect and compassion.

Our academic delivery invites students to grow and achieve their personal best through ongoing goal-setting and reflection in a non-competitive learning environment.

Statement of Purpose/Rationale

The purpose of this code is to give the context for a safe, caring and purposeful learning environment. Students at Wildflower School are expected to behave in ways that enhance the classroom community and refrain from activities that detract from the community.

The code of conduct applies to behaviour both on school premises and during activities that are off school premises that are organized or sponsored by the school. It also applies to behaviour beyond these times when it affects the safe, caring or orderly environment of the school. Such expectations can be set regarding website postings, “blogs”, text messages by or about students or staff using electronic devices and other means that negatively affect other members of the school community and student learning.

Inclusion

Wildflower School, in philosophy and in action, values inclusion. Classroom activities and procedures support the belief that every child’s contributions are of equal value.

Conduct Expectations

All members of the Wildflower community (students, staff, parents and visitors) are expected to honour the mission statement and adhere to the expectations.

Expectations for Students

The nature of a non-competitive multi-age learning environment in itself supports a safe, compassionate, learning environment. The following measures prevent the escalation of behaviours that may damage relationships in the community.

Students are expected to practice stewardship. They will be mindful of their physical environment and take care to use resources without waste and to keep their classroom and play areas tidy.

Time at school is for healthy interactions. Children are expected to come to school ready to learn and be involved with each other in supportive ways. They are expected to heed the adults charged with their care, as well as be mindful to include children that might otherwise be left out.

Children are also asked to keep in mind at all times that they are in a multi-age environment. Communication, even in free time, must be appropriate for all ages.

Violent and sexual themes are not allowed. This extends to Halloween costumes, literature, and digital resources brought to school. Play fighting and wrestling are not allowed, unless they are sanctioned by the school staff as part of the curriculum.

Any dangerous play objects that could be construed as weapons, must never come to school. This includes pocket knives. On occasion, with permission of the classroom teacher, a child may bring a ceremonial or symbolic weapon for use in a costume or a play. Tools such as carving instruments could be used in a curricular setting.

The presence of electronic devices and commercial collectibles detract from the kind of play that we encourage. The focus becomes on the objects rather than on our highly valued emphasis on humanity and imagination. Therefore we ask that electronic games, ipods, trading cards and all their relatives stay at home unless deemed appropriate by school staff.

The Wildflower School community encourages the use of a variety of strategies taught and modeled in the classroom and on the playground such as peer-to-peer communication, group problem solving and communication with staff members. School staff will keep families apprised of these strategies and encourage the use of them in the home to support children in using these tools in their everyday lives.

Unacceptable Conduct

Unacceptable conduct refers to behaviour that is destructive to self or others or damages the fabric of the school community.

Problem Solving (Consequences)

When responding to behaviour that does not meet Wildflower School's expectations of conduct, school policies are rooted in the understanding that:

- children need a safe, enduring relationship with the adults in their lives.
- Wildflower School staff are committed to consequences that uphold connections
- and sense of belonging. Most situations are handled within the classroom
- communities using strategies consistent with the principles of Restorative
- Justice, Restitution, Compassionate Communications and Attachment Theory as presented by Gordon Neufeld.

For situations that are not resolved at the classroom level, teachers invite parents to help resolve the situation in the interest of their child. The School Principal is informed and invited into the process as needed.

For situations that are unable to be resolved at the classroom level, teachers invite parents to help resolve the situation in the interest of their child. The Principal is informed and invited into the process as needed. In those rare situations that cannot be resolved with the support of the parents and School staff, decisions about Wildflower School's ability to meet the needs of the child will ensue. Options will be explored – one option may include the recommendation that the parents find another learning environment for their child.

If conflict between parents and staff does arise, the process outlined in the Conflict Resolution Policy will be offered to the parents.

In addition, there are certain acts and behaviours that are potentially hazardous to the student and to the school community. In those cases, parents and administration will be called in immediately and appropriate action will be taken.

Notification

Where there are serious breaches of the Wildflower School Code of Conduct, school staff have a responsibility to inform the parents of children involved. Administration may also have a responsibility to notify school district officials, police and other agencies. Parents are also encouraged to communicate with school staff about conduct related concerns and events in the home that may affect their child's behaviour.

Retaliation Prevention

Students reporting a breach of the code of conduct are assured that problem solving strategies will be used to repair relationships to avoid any retaliatory action.

Retaliation will not occur should a child or a parent choose to share with a staff member a concern that there has been a breach of the code of conduct. We value clear and honest communication.

Conflict Resolution Policy

February 2010

Policy

On the rare occasion when a conflict requires a structured approach for resolution, this policy will be followed.

Rationale

The intent of this policy is to uphold the spirit of the Mission Statement and create deeper and stronger relationships within the Wildflower School community.

Definition

Mediator – a person with a set of communication skills that may be used to clarify issues related to a disagreement with teachers and facilitate the resolution of the disagreement.

Parent advocate – a person who can support the parent through the conflict resolution process.

Procedures

1. In the event of a disagreement, parents or teachers will first express their concern directly to the person with whom they have the disagreement, using the following communication guidelines:
 - a. Find a mutually agreeable and appropriate time and place to discuss the issues with which there is a concern.
 - b. Discuss the concern in a timely fashion and at a time when emotions have subsided.
 - c. Use respectful language that separates the problem from the person.
Agree on who is attending the meeting.
 - d. Express the complaint only with the person with whom there is a disagreement. Complaints should not be aired in the broader community as it will damage what should be a bond of trust between the teacher and parent. On occasion, a parent or teacher may be supported by someone with whom there is a trust to speak confidentially. In some cases, either the parent or the teacher may request to proceed directly to step 2.
2. If the problem cannot be resolved directly by the parent and the teacher, the Administrator will be informed. The Administrator will arrange to meet with the parent and teacher to hear both sides of the conflict and attempt to help the parent and teacher reach resolution. The meeting will be planned within one week of Administration being informed. Parents and teachers may choose to bring a friend or advocate. All parties will be informed of the attendees and agree to the confidentiality of the meeting and the ensuing process. If necessary, a second meeting may be arranged.
3. If step 2 fails to resolve the conflict, then a mediator chosen by the parent will be called upon to work with the people involved in the conflict and attempt to find agreement on a resolution. The mediator will be selected from a list of trained people available for this role as created by the PAC and school staff. Attempts at reaching resolution will be made within the framework of three one hour meetings. At the discretion of the Administrator, more time may be allotted.

4. If agreement is reached, the Administrator will be informed of the resolution and will write a summary letter to both parties outlining the resolution. Where necessary, the Administrator will follow up to ensure the resolution is meeting the needs of both parties.
5. If there is no mutually agreeable solution to be found within the process described above, the Administrator will make a final judgment taking into account the needs of the students, staff, program and Wildflower School community. If either party is unhappy with the Administrator's decision, that decision may be appealed to the Superintendent.