



The WISE Charter

Introduction

The WISE Charter Society is a charter school board offering a public, tuition-free Waldorf education that serves to:

- educate the whole human being
- support physical, social-emotional, and intellectual development (also referred to as head, heart and hands)
- follow the principles of Waldorf education

Vision

The WISE Charter School provides a transformative environment where holistic education nurtures the physical, social-emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects of every student. Through artistic, imaginative and land-based learning, we cultivate innovative, independent thinkers, brimming with creativity and empathy, promoting social awareness and empowering students to make positive change in the world.

Purpose

Our purpose is to provide high-quality, evidence-based Waldorf education through an integrated curriculum that balances academic rigour, movement, arts, and creativity to support the development of each student's highest physical, social-emotional, and intellectual potential. The WISE Charter School holistically educates students to embrace lifelong learning, embody a keen sense of social responsibility, and demonstrate stewardship for nature. Our goal is for students to contribute positively towards their communities and the world, distinguishing themselves through their depth of character, creative and innovative thinking, and reverence for life.



Teaching Philosophy

The WISE Charter School tailors education to the seven-year developmental stages of children in order to foster their physical, social-emotional, intellectual, and spiritual growth. Waldorf is an inclusive educational model that is non-sectarian, based on the insights of anthroposophy (human wisdom) and founded by Rudolf Steiner. Specific themes and age-appropriate subject matter are brought to each grade, as outlined in the curriculum and further defined by our unique program, pedagogical approach, and teaching philosophy, all of which are student-centred.

The WISE Charter School delivers a Waldorf education alongside the incorporation of evidence-based teaching practice. The Waldorf teaching philosophy provides an educational approach rooted in seven key principles.

The Seven Principles of Waldorf Education

Image of the Human Being

Waldorf education recognizes that each individual is unique and has physical, social-emotional, intellectual, cultural, moral and spiritual dimensions. Waldorf provides a holistic education to support the development of each child with the intention of helping students integrate each of these dimensions and determine a unique and empowered path through life.

Human Development

Human beings develop in seven-year phases, which include early childhood, middle childhood and late childhood, or adolescence. Each stage predominantly develops the physical, social-emotional and intellectual dimensions, which Waldorf education uses to inform its programming, including its curriculum, teaching methodologies and assessment practices, in order to effectively meet the needs of the developing human being, in a healthy and balanced manner.



Social Change

Human beings serve humanity through the faculties of willing, feeling and thinking. Waldorf education aims to support the development of these capacities so that each individual is able to assume responsibility over one's own actions, feelings and thoughts, thereby contributing in meaningful ways to the well-being of the community, the natural world and society as a whole.

Relationships

Human beings develop the capacity for willing, feeling and thinking through interpersonal relationships that are cultivated over multiple years. Our community members benefit from enduring relationships fostered through intentional learning communities encompassing festivals, events, adult education, study, and volunteer activities.

Diversity

Human beings have different physical, social-emotional and intellectual capacities, which create a diverse range of development needs. Waldorf Education supports these varying needs by using an inclusive approach for all learners, ensuring that our school's program and curriculum reflect its student population, which is free of discrimination.

Collaboration

Human beings are interdependent and have a shared responsibility to uphold social interactions. Governance and internal administration are implemented in a manner that cultivates active collaboration, supportive relationships, effective leadership, consequential action, and accountability structures.

Learning Community

Human beings are lifelong learners who pursue growth and development to reach their highest potential. Waldorf education ensures that all staff and community members engage in active and ongoing ways to enhance their capacities as human beings through active learning, study, self-reflection and conscious social engagement.



The WISE Charter School aims to foster our guiding principles by prioritizing:

- an intentional learning community, whereby teachers work collaboratively with parent(s)/guardian(s) that participate in integral learning events
- research that supports the best interest and learning outcomes of its students
- shared values that are emphasized within the community and centred on responsibility, reciprocity, stewardship, and a passion for life and lifelong learning

Waldorf Approach

Our program is significantly different from other programs in the Edmonton region as we provide holistic education through a unique instructional approach, as well as an enriched curriculum that reflects child development and a novel learning experience, all through Waldorf pedagogy.

Instructional Approach

Academic Rigour

- Whole-class delivery develops willing, feeling and thinking forces
- Cross-curricular connections challenge and integrate physical, social-emotional and intellectual capacities
- Physical documentation of learning in a Main Lesson Book that includes handwritten information and thematic illustrations

Pedagogical Storytelling

- New knowledge, content, and information is presented through pedagogical storytelling.
- Stories are shared orally wherever possible to enhance student's visual working memory and receptive oral language skills.
- Retelling and recollection of stories is used to support student retention and conceptual understanding.



- Oral storytelling supports linguistic development through the visualization of spoken words, enhancement of vocabulary, and sustained brain activity¹
- Developmentally-appropriate content reflects the social-emotional development of each age range and cultivates imagination through fairy tales, fables, mythologies sagas, legends, biographies and novel studies.

Inquiry-Based Learning

- Information is taught through teacher-led experiential learning
- Material is presented from whole (breadth of understanding) to parts (discrete sub-topics).
- The iterative process between analysis and synthesis is valued and supported by high-level questions to promote higher-level thinking.
- Dynamic lessons include a rhythmic process.
- Instruction offers a phenomenological approach which stimulates curiosity and wonder
- Lessons use real-world contexts and hands-on learning to deepen understanding

Arts-Integration

Lessons include art-based enrichment such as:

- Speech activities (i.e verses, poems, riddles, tongue twisters etc.)
- Musical activities (i.e. singing, body percussion, rhythm sticks, recorder etc.)
- Dramatic activities (i.e. poem/verse recitation, play performance etc.)
- Visual arts activities (i.e. beeswax/clay sculpting, painting, form drawing etc.)
- Movement activities (i.e. synchronized bean bag exercise, bal-a-vis-x balls, copper rod work, eurythmy, folk dancing, etc.)

¹ Excerpts from [“Effects of storytelling on the childhood brain: near-infrared spectroscopic comparison with the effects of picture-book reading”](#) (2018)



- Storytelling activities (i.e. imaginative pictures, metaphors, tales, biographies, therapeutic or pedagogical stories, etc.)
- Bookwork activities (i.e pages that document a child's learning, which include written and artistic compositions made by each student's own hand)

Literacy Development

- Progression moves gradually from listening and speaking to writing and reading
- Reading is taught through phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics and oral language acquisition
- Cursive writing is introduced in Grade 3

Relationship-Based Learning

- Whole-class instructional approach nurtures peer-peer relationships
- A class community transitions throughout the years enabling students, parents and teachers to deepen relationships among a single class cohort
- Class Teachers strive to weave the social fabric of the class and the school community by:
 - greeting each individual student upon entering the classroom (i.e eye contact, handshake, verbal check-in etc.)
 - leading the class through synchronized whole-class movement activities
 - cultivating an understanding that each student has unique physical, social-emotional and intellectual capacities
 - establishing buddy systems between grades (i.e Kinder and Class 8, Class 1 and 9 etc.)



Digital Minimalism and Intentional Inclusion of Digital Technology

- Limitation of digital technology which is restricted to Class 8 and above
- Interdiction of cell phones during school hours
- Utilization of chalkboards to deliver curricular content (i.e. displayed and individual chalkboards in place of tablets and laptops)
- Inclusion of direct engagement with the physical world to support wellbeing and foster a humanistic approach to applications of technology
- Provision of hands-on experiences
- Exposure to non-digital forms of technology such as dyeing, spinning, weaving, farming etc.

Land-Based Learning

Regular opportunities to develop a connection with the natural world in all weather conditions include:

- Outdoor Classrooms (i.e. outdoor chalkboards and benches available for use)
- Nature Walk (i.e. meaningful experiences out in nature)
- Field Experiences (i.e. outdoor activities that involve nature studies)
- Class Traditions (i.e. outdoor activities such as farming, camping, canoeing etc.)
- Outdoor Education (i.e. an elective offered to Class 7-9 that includes meaningful experiences such as camping, fire-building, shelter-making etc.)

Aesthetic Environment

- Each classroom has a designated paint colour, which is applied using lazure, a technique that brings about a luminous quality to the walls and supports a harmonious environment
- Objects within the classroom are carefully selected to include natural materials, which have been proven to help regulate the central nervous system of human beings²

² Excerpts from [“Physiological effects of wood on humans: a review”](#) (December 2016)



Although wooden materials are primarily used within the classroom, other natural materials are used as well, such as silk, cotton, wool, beeswax, clay etc.

- Consideration is given to what is displayed on the walls, so as to promote a sense of well-being and reduce overstimulation
- Thematic illustrations are presented on chalkboards for each block to bring the content to life

Student Population to be Served

The WISE Charter School welcomes K-9 students located in Edmonton and surrounding areas from diverse backgrounds who are committed to engaging in all dimensions of a Waldorf education, balancing academic, artistic and physical pursuits. WISE Charter School students are dedicated to personal growth, lifelong learning, social harmony, environmental stewardship, digital minimalism, and a sense of responsibility for our shared interconnectedness and collective humanity.

In time, the WISE Charter School will seek to welcome students from K-12.



Charter Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

STUDENTS DEMONSTRATE
THEIR HIGHEST POTENTIAL IN
PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT.

STUDENTS DEMONSTRATE
THEIR HIGHEST POTENTIAL
IN SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL
DEVELOPMENT.



STUDENTS DEMONSTRATE
THEIR HIGHEST POTENTIAL IN
INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT.

STUDENTS THRIVE IN A COMMUNITY
BUILT ON MUTUAL RESPECT,
COLLABORATION, AND CARING
RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS,
STAFF MEMBERS AND PARENTS.

Ensuring the balanced development of the physical, social-emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects of each student is integral to Waldorf education. The WISE Charter School monitors student progress through the incorporation of meaningful measures that assess threefold development at an age-appropriate level.



Goal One: Students demonstrate their highest potential in physical development.

Student Learning Outcomes: Physical development is an integral part of the educational process that contributes to the overall development of the child.

- Students participate in daily movement and physical activities
- Students engage in outdoor and hands-on opportunities in nature
- Students increase their physical literacy, endurance, and stamina
- Students improve their gross and fine motor skills

Local Measures

- School administered assessments
- School surveys
- Student self-assessment

Provincial Measures

- AEAM Survey

Strategies

- Educators receive professional development and mentorship on aligning physical activity with developmental phases
- Educators integrate physical activity into their daily rhythms and routines
- Educators emphasize skill development in younger grades and introduce formal sports in late elementary school and junior high
- Educators teach gross motor skills through physical activities such as beanbag, bal-a-vis x, bilateral movement, dance, and gardening activities
- Educators teach fine motor skills through physical activities such as handwriting, form drawing, knitting, handwork, sculpting, flute, ukulele, and other practical art activities
- Educators provide opportunities for movement in natural spaces, such as outdoor classrooms, nature walks and overnight field trips
- Educators offer arts-core instruction to support visual-motor development



Goal Two: Students demonstrate their highest potential in social-emotional development.

Student Learning Outcome: Social-emotional development is an integral part of the educational process that contributes to the overall development of the child.

- Students demonstrate a desire to learn through a positive growth mindset
- Students exhibit the qualities of social-emotional intelligence, including self-management, self-awareness, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness
- Students demonstrate respect for themselves, each other and the environment

Local Measures

- School administered assessments
- School survey
- School Attendance

Provincial Measures

- AEAM Survey

Strategies

- Educators teach social-emotional skills using pedagogical storytelling
- Educators support social-emotional skills through relationship-building with students, staff, parents and guardians
- Educators foster a sense of positive interdependence and respect within the community
- Educators model a positive growth mindset
- Educators exhibit reverence for nature and its interconnectedness with people
- Educators provide opportunities for student collaboration through pedagogical activities such as class jobs, class plays and buddy systems
- Educators establish predictable daily rhythms and routines to support emotional regulation
- Educators use research-based evidence to support positive behaviour systems



- Educators promote internal fairs and festivals to support home to school connections
- Educators provide research-based disciplinary approaches
- Educators strive to establish partnerships with community organizations to support social-emotional learning
- Educators incorporate pedagogical storytelling to support intercultural understanding
- Educators offer land-based learning to cultivate a sense of responsibility and stewardship for nature

Goal Three: Students demonstrate their highest potential in intellectual development.

Student Learning Outcomes: Intellectual development is an integral part of the educational process that contributes to the overall development of the child.

- Students pursue academic excellence
- Students develop critical thinking skills
- Students engage in effective problem-solving skills
- Students consider cross-curricular connections between subject matter
- Students develop an understanding of the world beyond the classroom and identify concrete ways to make positive change

Local Measures

- School administered assessments
- School survey
- Student self-assessment

Provincial Measures

- AEAM Survey
- Student Learning Assessments
- PAT achievement

Strategies



- Educators maintain academic rigour and high standards of achievement
- Educators encourage students to strive for excellence
- Educators provide structured opportunities for students to engage in self-reflection and goal-setting
- Educators collaborate with students to identify individualized learning supports
- Educators receive professional development and mentorship on Waldorf pedagogy
- Educators embed higher-order thinking skills into their instruction
- Educators offer opportunities for students to engage in critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- Educators collaborate with one another to identify thematic connections between subject matter
- Educators present content using meaningful applications in real-life contexts
- Educators facilitate conversations about the interconnectedness of our environment and communities
- Educators empower students to contribute meaningfully to their communities

Goal Four: Students thrive in a community built on mutual respect, collaboration, and caring relationships with students, staff members and parents.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- Students benefit from their physical, social-emotional, intellectual and spiritual development
- Students identify themselves as belonging to a collaborative learning community
- Students identify parents and teachers as integral members of a collaborative learning community

Local Measures

- School administered assessments



- School survey

Provincial Measures

- AEAM Survey
- PAT results
- Student Learning Assessments

Strategies

- Educators participate in self-reflection and goal-setting
- Educators engage in regular opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and practice within an established professional learning community
- Educators attend to the holistic needs of students
- Educators offer parent evenings, events, workshops and programs that foster community involvement and relationship-building among families

Grades and Class Composition

At the WISE Charter School, we provide comprehensive K-9 educational programming, with the intention of expanding our offerings. Our vision is to eventually establish a high school for 10-12 programming. Additionally, we aim to enhance our facilities in order to accommodate developmental needs and enriched learning experiences.

Consideration of class sizes is a cornerstone of our approach, as they ensure the efficacy of the Waldorf pedagogical method. The composition and class size is determined by the principal, with careful consideration given to facilitating nurturing relationships, and whole-class instruction balanced with needed individualization, to ensure the holistic development of each child; with a preference for small classes. This structure fosters a close-knit learning environment, while also allowing for individualized attention and a deeper, more meaningful educational experience for each student.



Selection Criteria

An inclusive approach to admissions offers enrollment opportunities for all students who meet the parameters of the student population we serve. For open positions, WISE follows a fair and equitable selection process that supports a diverse learning community. Enrollment is considered upon completion of all necessary pre-enrollment paperwork and requirements.

In advance of each year, the Principal will be responsible for making a recommendation on the number of spaces available for new student enrollment in each grade, and the Superintendent will be responsible for approving the enrollment plan. Enrollment levels may be adjusted from year to year to reflect current research and best practices.

Students who meet the population parameters we serve will be enrolled in the following priority order:

- **Existing WISE Charter students:** Registered students of the WISE Charter who declare their intention to re-enroll within the required timelines, will be re-registered for the following school year. In the school's first year of operations, priority status will be given to families registered at the WISE
- **Siblings of current students:** Siblings of students attending the WISE Charter as well as siblings of former WISE Charter students
- **Children of WISE faculty and staff members**
- **Students with a previous commitment to Waldorf Education:** Applicants with a background in Waldorf education
- **Lottery System:** If the number of eligible applicants still exceeds capacity, a random selection lottery will be conducted among those who meet the audience parameters and have fully completed the enrolment process.

In accordance with their lottery number and priority status, students will be placed on a waitlist. Each grade shall have its own waitlist, and waitlist positions will be reset annually. If a waitlisted student is not accepted in a given year, their entry into the lottery the following year must be reinitiated. Offers of enrolment will be made in accordance with a student's waitlist position based on the number of spots available per grade. Students will be considered



enrolled once they have accepted the offer of enrollment, paid the school fees, and completed all required registration paperwork.

Should a student not be offered enrollment, parents may appeal this decision to the Superintendent. Should the Superintendent deny enrollment, the parents may then appeal to the board. Should the board make a determination that the enrollment has been denied, the parents may appeal the Board's decision to the Minister of Education where the Education Act or its successor and/or ministerial regulations provide for such appeal.

Curriculum

The WISE Charter School delivers the Alberta Program of Studies and supports students in achieving its learning outcomes. In addition to the Alberta Program of Studies, we also provide curricula developed by local Waldorf teachers, who use a distinct educational approach to deliver age-appropriate content. An outline of this curricula will be available on our website and based on a pedagogical understanding of the developing human being, within a given historical and sociocultural context. Our Waldorf programming enhances the Alberta Program of Studies by encouraging a holistic head, heart, and hands approach to learning, as well as meeting a range of diverse learning styles and enabling graduates to contribute positively towards social change.

Collaboration and Sharing Innovation

The WISE Charter School emphasizes creativity, imagination, and hands-on learning to provide a balanced education that fosters independent thinking, social responsibility, and a deep connection to the natural world. Where the physical, social-emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspect of every child is nurtured we integrate arts, academics, and practical skills in a way that resonates with each stage of a child's development. Sharing research, innovations, and best practices that support this approach with other school divisions, Indigenous school districts, and the education sector as a whole is an important responsibility of being a charter



school in Alberta. Collaboration is integral within Waldorf pedagogy; as such, the WISE Charter School embraces the opportunity to share knowledge and insights with, as well as learn from, the wider education sector.

Research, innovations and best practices at the WISE Charter School will be shared among the educational community in a range of the following ways:

- WISE Charter School website, monthly newsletters and social media
- Annual Research reports for the WISE Charter Board AGM and community engagement events
- Faculty meetings and Professional Development days
- The WISE Annual Gateways Conference, which hosts Waldorf-education focused presentations and workshops for faculty, parents and educators
- White papers, made available online, that translate research findings into practical insights and recommendations for classroom practices and parenting
- Presentation to the Greater Edmonton Teachers Convention
- WISE Charter School 'Open House' events and tours where Waldorf education approaches and research is shared with prospective parents, teachers and families
- Preparing and sharing curriculum tools and resources with other school boards
- Alberta Education Assurance reporting: Education Plan and Annual Education Results Report
- Organizations such as the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) and the Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium (ERLC).

Research will be conducted in collaboration with post-secondary institutions to measure and assess the impact of Waldorf education on student learning outcomes. The WISE Charter School will work with a host of post-secondary institutions for the purpose of contributing to innovations in teaching. Research collaborations for the benefit of learning of all students in Alberta will include institutions, such as:

- University of Alberta



- University of Lethbridge
- Antioch University, New England
- Rudolf Steiner College Canada
- Calgary Waldorf School
- Mount Royal University
- Blue Quill University
- Saddle Lake School District (federal)

A facilitated process will determine priority research topics, approaches and methodologies to enhance innovation and student learning outcomes. Research partners will be selected on the basis of best fit with planned research and methodologies.

Charter Amendment

Matters that could affect the ability of the school to provide effective education or that could enhance program delivery to its students may require a future amendment of the Charter. Any amendment to the Charter shall follow the below process and be in accordance with the Education Act and is subject to approval by the Minister of Education.

Charter Amendment Process

Amending the Charter

- I. The Charter may be amended as necessary to enhance the delivery of the School's programs, in accordance with the philosophy, purpose and vision of the School;
- II. Any member of the Charter Board or the Society may request that the Charter Board review a term or condition of the Charter;
- III. The Charter Board shall meet within thirty days to consider the amendment request. The Charter Board's decision shall be communicated, in writing, within seventy-two hours to the requesting member. If the amendment proposal is rejected, it may be



discussed again after one year. If the amendment proposal is accepted, the Charter Board shall have not less than thirty days to provide Society members with a copy of the proposed amendment and call a meeting of the members of the Society. At this meeting, the proposed amendment will either be approved or rejected by a majority vote of Society members present and entitled to vote at such a meeting. Minor rewording of the amendment that does not affect either the substance or intent of the amendment may also be considered at this meeting.

- IV. The decision of the Society is final, and the result of the vote will be conveyed in writing to the requesting member within seventy-two hours. If the amendment proposal is rejected, it may be discussed again after one year.
- V. In the event the proposed amendment(s) are approved by the Society, the Charter Board shall seek to obtain the necessary approval from the Minister of Education in accordance with the regulations before any amendment will come into effect.

Termination and Dissolution of the Charter

In accordance with the most up to date Alberta Charter Schools Regulation, notwithstanding that the term of the WISE Charter has not expired or been repealed by the Minister of Education, the WISE Charter Board may decide to terminate the operation of its charter school and to dissolve the charter school at the end of a specific school year. In such a circumstance, the following dissolution process will be followed:

1. Terminating the Charter

- 1.1. The Board shall notify the Minister of Education of its intent to terminate the operation of its charter school at the end of a school year;
- 1.2. Such notice will be given to the Minister by no later than January 31st of the year in which the termination shall occur;



- 1.3. Termination of school operations and dissolution of the charter school will only commence after the written approval of the Minister for the termination of operations has been received.

2. Dissolving the Society

- 2.1. The Charter Board shall exist in perpetuity unless dissolved:
 - 2.1.1. Due to a decision by the Minister of Education not to approve or renew the Charter;
or
 - 2.1.2. On a voluntary vote of the Board of Directors of the WISE Charter School Society.
 - 2.1.3. In the event that either the Minister of Education does not approve or renew the Charter, or the Charter decides not to apply for a renewal of the charter upon the expiration of its term, the Board of Directors shall proceed with the dissolution of the charter school.

3. Notice of Dissolution

- 3.1. Within two (2) weeks of receiving Ministerial approval to dissolve the Charter school, the Board shall, in accordance with applicable legislation, issue a written Notice of Dissolution to all stakeholders. Notice of dissolution and termination of WISE Charter School operations shall provide the reasons for the decision, the effective date of dissolution, and the proposed plan for dissolution.

4. The Dissolution Process

- 4.1. The Dissolution Process shall be carried out by the Board.
- 4.2. The Board shall use its best efforts to meet financial and other obligations of the School throughout the Dissolution
- 4.3. After issuing a Notice of Dissolution to the Stakeholders, the Board shall proceed to, in a timely fashion:
 - a. Issue Notice pursuant to any rental or lease agreements;
 - b. Assess and determine a value for any assets owned by the Board;



- c. Liquidate assets owned by the Board either through public auction or private sale, with proceeds to be allocated in accordance with the following priority ranking:
 - i. Paying off the Society's debts and liabilities;
 - ii. Return any surplus that can be attributed to provincial funding to the Provincial Treasurer;
 - iii. Donating any remaining proceeds to philosophically-aligned community organizations, as determined by the Directors.

5. Transfer of Student Records Upon Dissolution

Upon dissolution of the Charter Authority, the Charter Board will work with other school authorities and parents/guardians of registered children to facilitate the transfer of students to other schools. As such, the Charter Board shall:

- 5.1. Provide each registered student's parent/guardian with information on the procedure specified in the Student Record Regulation 97/2019, or its subsequent amendments or revisions, for a receiving school to request the student record for that student; and
- 5.2. Maintain responsibility for the transfer of each student's records for a period of three (3) months from the date the Board specified as its last day of school operations. Upon expiry of this period, any remaining student records that have not been transferred shall be sent to the Minister of Education in accordance with the terms of applicable privacy legislation.