



Live. Learn. Show up!

October 28, 2021

Dear Families,

Due to the recent high number of absences on Fridays, our middle school team would like to emphasize the importance of our experiential education program and introduce a make-up policy that we will be implementing for students who are absent beginning this Friday, October 29, 2021. It is our hope that students can attend each Friday!

Our experiential learning program is essential and central to our curriculum in so many ways, and it is part of the unique framework of the holistic education we wish to provide for your child. We work throughout the process of planning and implementing our experiential program to maintain connections to our work within the classroom. Often the class work occurring before and after an experience may come to life in a new setting. This goes both ways. Consider our recent Mini Village Project and the potential for connecting to social studies concepts throughout the year as one example. Concepts that are more abstract on paper can suddenly make more sense in real world application.

We see our curriculum as so much more than the four core subjects of math, science, language arts and social studies. Art appreciation and being present in the beauty in nature are just some examples that anchor and enrich the student experience and the curriculum we wish to provide. These become shared experiences that are part of the ongoing narrative of the students' community and learning.

Other currents that run through our program intentionally attend to developmental growth. The multi-age nature of their collaboration builds a sense of being part of a long range process. The peer mentor relationships that naturally develop continuously recreate the foundation of what becomes a dynamic learning community. This feeling of being part of a community larger than themselves is a healthy and functional part of social development at this age. Measuring oneself against the peer community, practicing conflict resolution, building resilience, and establishing one's own moral code all occur within the safety net of the experiences we provide. Students are at a time of life where they need deep peer group discussions and interaction as they become more self aware.

Another goal of our program builds a sense of place for your child within the human and natural communities in which they dwell. Young adolescents need to be valued and recognized for their ideas and contributions more than ever. When students help with local food distribution, they contribute to their community in a meaningful way. Good old fashioned work, along with their complaints, help to serve important developmental needs! Even the mental mapping that occurs as we walk various routes through town contribute to building a sense of place. The same goes for local hikes and learning the local flora and fauna of this place called home. We have also learned not to discount the value in learning to stop, slow down and lie in the grass looking up at the clouds.

When students are absent, they miss out on all of this.

Students receive three grades for one Friday experience - preparation (the Big 5), participation (their engagement throughout the experience), and reflection (journal). Just like with other missed classwork this needs to be made up.

The new policy as of Friday, October 29, 2021: If a student is absent on Friday, they must make up two of these grades - participation and reflection. If there is no attempt to do so, students will receive a failing grade in both categories.

Students must make up their Friday by completing an experience from the list below and writing a reflection about this experience. *(Pics and journal entry or it didn't happen!)* Students will have two weeks to complete this following their Friday absence.

Choices for Make-Up Experiences

- Volunteer at the High Desert Humane Society
- Volunteer at The Commons
- Visit the Silver City Museum
- Visit the Western New Mexico Museum
- Visit the Ft. Bayard Museum
- Visit the Mimbres Heritage Cultural Site
- Volunteer to help clean up the Big Ditch (monthly with Silver City Watershed Keepers)
- Visit the Gila Cliff Dwellings
- Take a hike on Boston Hill
- Take a hike on San Vicente Trail
- Take a hike at Dragonfly Trail, Big Tree, or Ft. Bayard
- Visit two art galleries downtown
- Visit four murals throughout the city
- Visit the Maker's Market and participate in an activity
- Visit WNMU's greenhouse
- Attend an art show at McCray Gallery
- Attend a performance or event through WNMU Cultural Affairs
- Plan and prepare a meal for your family
- Quiet nature sit with reflection
- Have a different idea? Make a proposal to your advisor.

IT IS OUR HOPE THAT STUDENTS DO NOT MISS FRIDAYS, BUT NOW YOU KNOW WHAT CAN BE DONE IF THEY DO.

Thank you for your support,
Aldo Middle School Team