

Dear Community,

Thank you for your support of the only charter school in Grant County. Aldo Leopold Charter School is a State Public Charter School that offers a free education to all students in grades 6 through 12. Currently our enrollment is 167 students. We are at our capacity in the current facility, but next year the entire school will be moving to the WNMU campus if all remodeling goes as planned, and we hope to achieve our charter capacity of 210 students in the future.

As part of our school's commitment to active transparency, we would like to update you on the aspect of our school that has to do with the management of risk. As part of our curriculum of Experiential Education, we spend a good bit of time learning outside the classroom. Our mission is to provide an engaging and challenging educational program emphasizing direct experience, inquiry learning, stimulation of the creative process, and stewardship of our community and natural environment. We take our mission seriously and want to manage the inherent risk involved with experiential education. This type of learning requires the careful evaluation and implementation of policies and procedures for making these experiences as safe and effective as possible.

In the aftermath of the tragedy that took the lives of three of our students in May 2014, Aldo Leopold Charter School reached a legal agreement with their families. One of the elements of the agreement, welcomed by our school, was to bring in an industry expert in the field of experiential and outdoor education to evaluate our program from a risk-analysis perspective.

In May of 2016 Aldo Leopold completed a very rigorous outdoor program safety and policy review by the Association for Experiential Education (AEE). They reviewed all program elements, including all risk-management systems, backpacking, bicycling, hiking, skiing, medication management, wilderness first-aid training, incident data management, and communication.

The AEE summary conclusion stated that "Aldo Leopold Charter School has conducted a rigorous examination of their experiential education program over the past two years. They are a dedicated staff that worked diligently to address all facets of their risk management system. ALCS generally is in line with most industry standards. The reviewer found all staff to be transparent, welcoming and eager to continue improving the delivery of their program. The practices instituted to address the activity approval process, the implementation of a Risk Management Committee and staff training is sound. It was a pleasure to spend time with staff

that are extremely dedicated to their mission of improving the lives of their students in a holistic approach of solid academics combined with the experiential programs to achieve the mission.” The school’s Governing Council and Administration encourage the public to examine the documents. The full review of ALCS outdoor education programs by the AEE is available for public review at the school office and on our web site: <http://aldocs.org>.

While the review was overall quite positive, we have been working hard to implement its recommendations, as well as continued improvement in developing and practicing policies and procedures. Jim McIntosh is our designated Risk Management Coordinator. He is supported by a volunteer Risk Management Committee, and also works with AEE consultants and other industry experts.

Again, in an effort to increase transparency and accountability, we invite you to review these documents, and if you have any thoughts or comments on this or any other aspect of our school, we welcome you to contact us. We have several ways for parents and community members to contact the school. Check our school website for contact lists, a comment box, and Governing Council and School Advisory Council meeting dates. The public is welcome to attend and make comments at these two councils. You may, of course also call us at (575) 538-2547 or email our Director, Wayne Sherwood, at wsherwood@aldocs.org.

We honor the trust that parents place in us. We also recognize that the children in our care are loved and cherished by a large network of people in our community and beyond. We take our responsibility for their care and safety seriously. We are committed to providing an outstanding and exciting experiential education program for our students, while meeting and exceeding industry best practices in risk management. Thank you for your continued support of Aldo Leopold Charter School.

Sincerely,

Wayne Sherwood
Aldo Leopold Charter School, Director

