

Enrollment Growth Through Customer Experience Design

ISACS Annual Conference, November 2019

Introduction

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Associate Head of School,
Charles Wright Academy
Former Head of School,
Watershed School

Agenda

- I. Our Admissions Challenge
- II. Discovering Our Core
- III. What is Brand?

Our Journey

- IV. From Admissions Director to Chief Experience Officer
- V. Investing in Program Quality
- VI. Authentic Voice and Visual Identity



The Admissions Challenge

- Opened 2004 with 14 students
- Slow growth to 74 students in 2012-2013
- Misunderstood in market, leading to mission-inappropriate admissions
- Reduced to 52 students in 2013-2014
- Ongoing donations required to stay afloat

82%

Growth Over Three Years

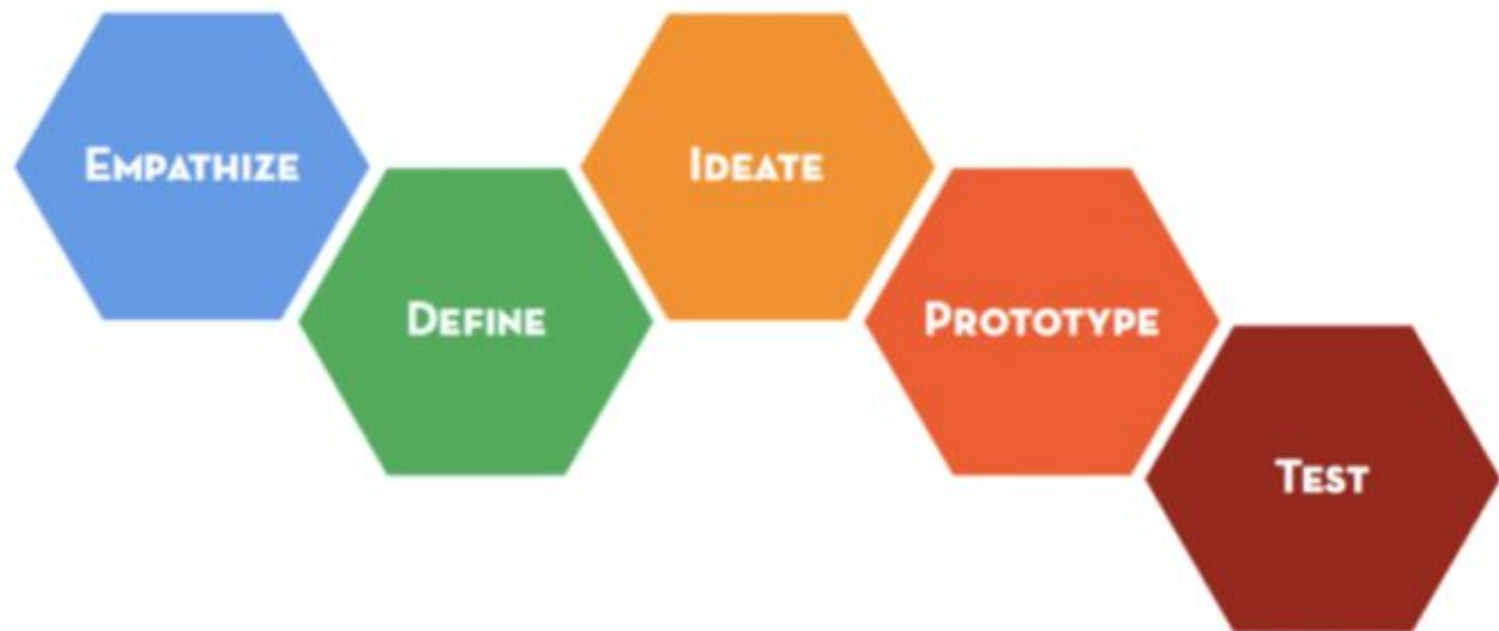


Brand is
what you do
every day.

“Brand is a set of expectations, memories, stories and relationships that, taken together, account for a customer’s decision to choose one service over another.”

– Seth Godin

What expectations, memories,
stories and relationships are you
building as a school?



The **mindsets** and **habits** of designers [esp. when applied to problems that aren't traditional “design problems.”]

Discovering Our Core

“Brand is what people say about you when you’re not in the room.”

– Jeff Bezos

How do you know what your customer is saying, thinking, feeling, hearing about your school?

Customer Research for the Rebrand

Deep design-driven interviews with three key populations:

- Current families
- Families that left
- Families eligible to apply who weren't considering Watershed

“Playing Anthropologist”

What attracted you to Watershed in the first place?

Where did Watershed meet those expectations? Where didn't they?

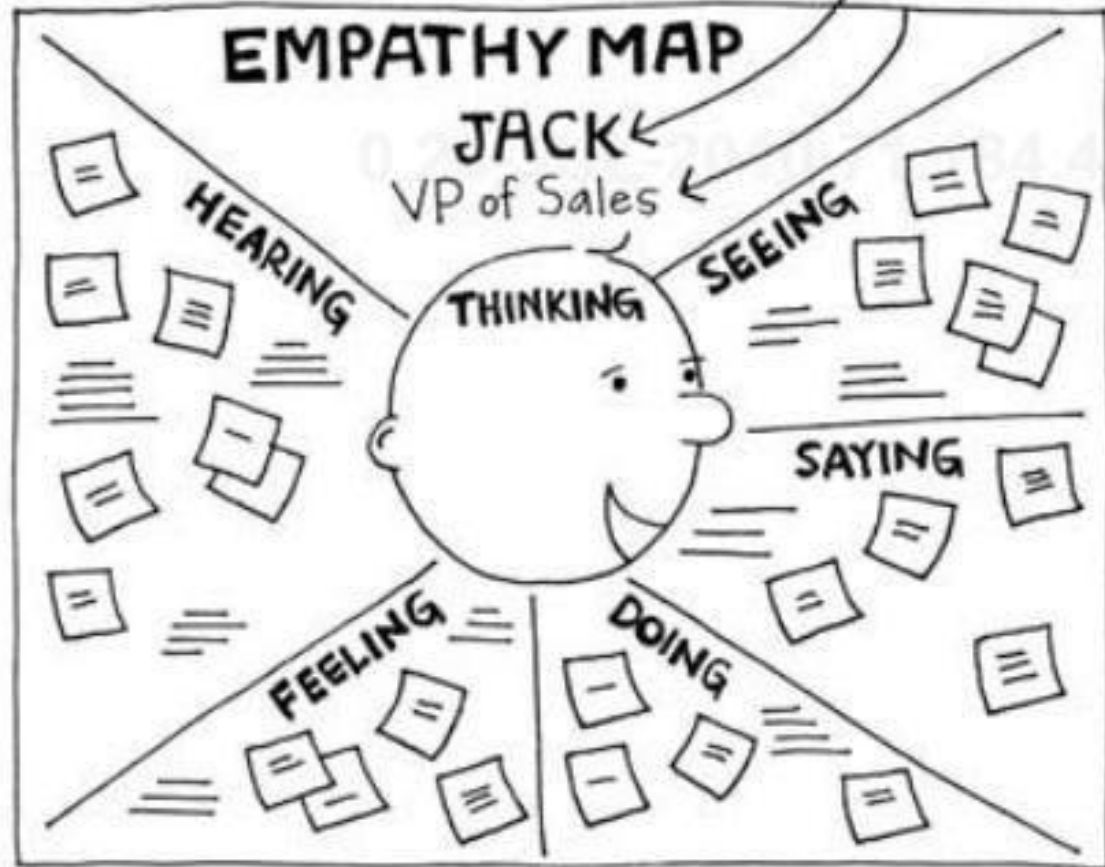
Who made the decision to leave?

When did that happen?

What factors drove their decision?

What did you gain by switching schools? What did you lose?

(person known to the group)
(title)



If you don't take care
of your marketing,
your market will take
care of you.

-Mishel Gantz

“My child loves
coming to Watershed
every day.”

Mission Development Process

- Board Retreat kicked off the process and collected key ideas (October 2014)
- Story collection from students in community meeting and faculty/staff in faculty meeting; examination of founding documents; themes emerged
- First draft by HOS
- Feedback from students, faculty/staff in community meetings
- Second draft by HOS
- Feedback from parents via survey
- Third draft by HOS
- Discussion and slight revision by board, followed by approval (January 2015)

IF WATERSHED CLOSED,
WHAT WOULD BE LOST?

pg. 60

Figure 1

20 years
15 years
10 years

Washed

1990

The End of Learning

“Playing Anthropologist”

How do you describe Watershed to a friend?

What makes Watershed different from other schools?

How does it feel to go to Watershed?

What “snapshots” from your time here are unique to Watershed?

If Watershed closed and all the students found new schools and all the teachers found new jobs, what would be lost in the world?

“Talking with youth in San Francisco about what life is like as a 1st generation immigrant from China.”

“My students waking with frost on their sleeping bags after a fast night of sleeping out under the stars.”

“Building water filters after researching global water access to figure out the best and most affordable way to clean contaminated water.”

Watershed's Mission (2015):

To spark adventure and wonder,
foster inquiry and community, and
build the character and ability of
students to take on the world's
greatest challenges.

Brand Architecture

Brand Promise

A place where students love coming to school,
feel supported and challenged, and are ready for success in
college and for life.

Brand Personality

- Authentic
- Passionate
- Cutting Edge
- Unpretentious

Messaging Framework

1. Learn with a Purpose
2. A Community Where You Can Be Yourself
3. Love Coming To School Every Day
4. Ready for College and for Life

The Elevator Speech

Watershed students never sit in class and wonder:
"When will I use this in real life?"

At Watershed, students learn by going off campus, working with experts, and creating solutions to real-world problems. Instead of memorizing answers for standardized tests, they might learn economics by starting a small business or master algebra by solving an engineering problem.

Watershed students learn with a purpose. Along the way, they're part of a close-knit community that allows them to be who they are. It's no wonder they love coming to school every day.

Creating a Consistent Visual Identity



Watershed
SCHOOL

ADVENTURE | CHALLENGE | MEANING | CONFIDENCE
serving grades 6-12



Search



About ▾

Why Choose Watershed?

Educational Program ▾

Admissions ▾

Resources ▾

Contact ▾

Donate ▾

Watershed School Boulder CO



Visit Us

We love to show off our school. Attend an Open House, an Information Session, or schedule a Shadow Day.



Call

Find out more about Watershed School right here. Contact us for Admissions by calling **303.440.7520.**

- About Our Program
- Learning Expeditions
- Curriculum Framework
- Assessment
- Sample Courses
- Daily Schedule
- College Acceptance
- Community Building
- Service Learning
- Program FAQ
- Glossary



Request Info

Interested in sitting down at the dining room table with a stack of brochures? We get requests for Watershed School packets here.



Parent Portal

Watershed School parents, enter here to access your student's records.



WATERSHED
SCHOOL

[HOME](#)

[ABOUT US](#)

[PROGRAM](#)

[ADMISSIONS](#)

[CURRENT FAMILIES](#)

REAL-WORLD ACADEMICS

COMMUNITY LIFE

OUTDOOR EDUCATION

MAY TERM AND GLOBAL STUDY

READY FOR COLLEGE AND LIFE

MIDDLE SCHOOL



Concrete over abstract
Visceral over logical
Visual over verbal









Watershed

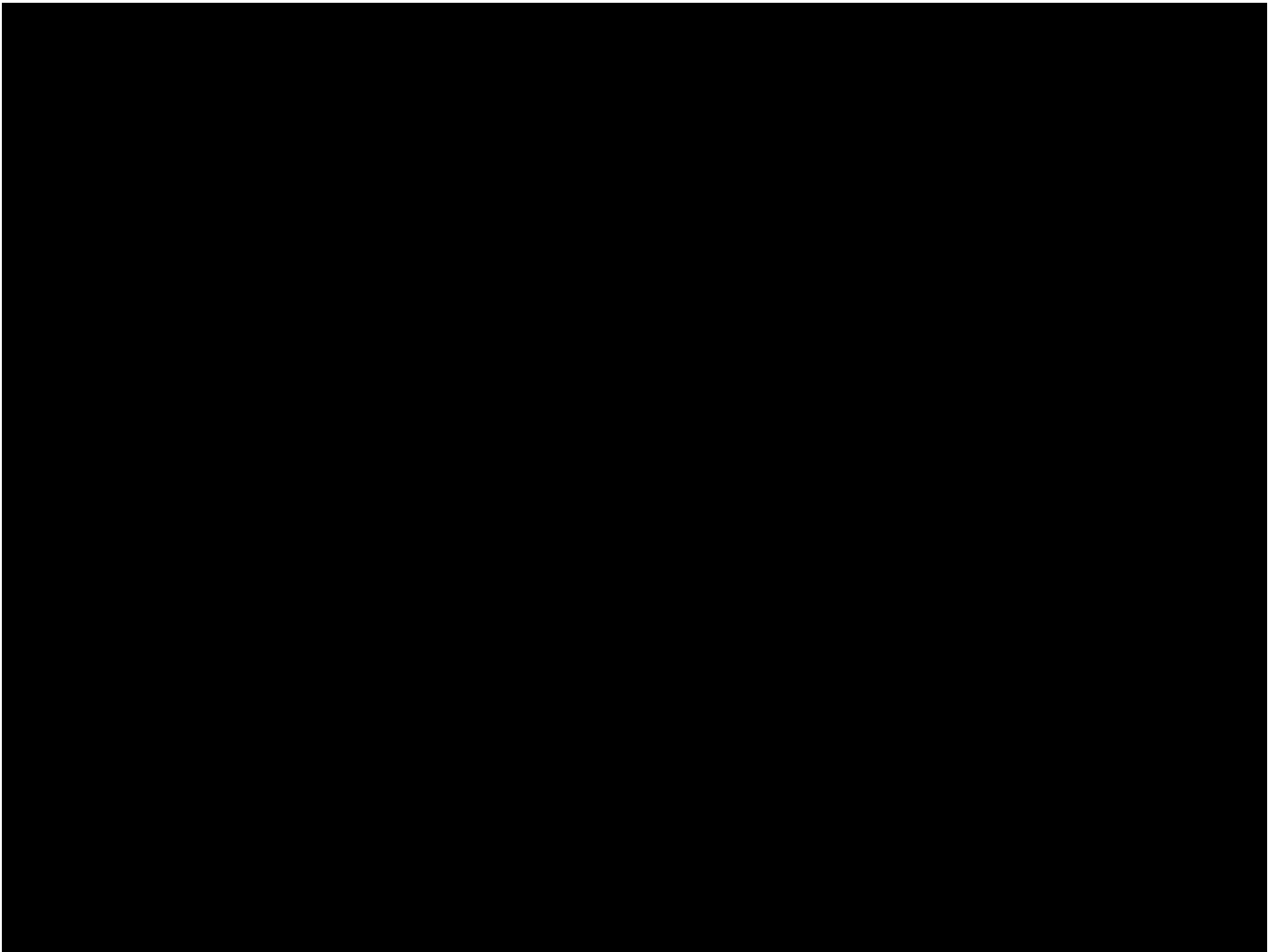


COLOR PALETTE





WATERSHED
SCHOOL





Brand is
what you do
every day.

From Admissions Director to Chief Experience Officer (CXO)

What touchpoints do
prospective, current,
and former families
have with your
school?





At public K-5

Watershed sponsorship

Googles Watershed

Talks to friend of friend

Dissatisfied with public MS



Seventh Grade Switcher

SEVENTH GRADE SWITCHER'S DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Watershed sponsors their PTAC Auction. "That's unusual!"

Looks interesting, intrigued

Friend says, "Isn't that the school for problem kids?"

Waits a year to pursue admission



Seventh Grade Switcher

EMOTIONAL JOURNEYS





GRATITUDE

AMELIA,

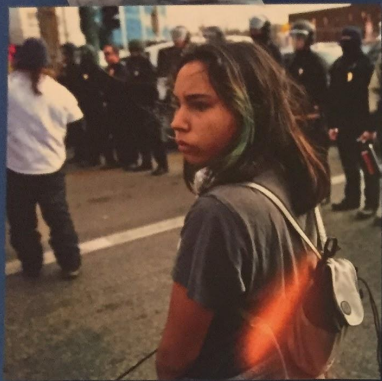
WE ARE SO GLAD YOU CAME
TO SPEND THE DAY WITH US!

WE HOPE YOU ENJOYED YOUR VISIT
AND THAT WE SEE YOU AGAIN
SOON!

- All of us at WATERSHED


OPTIMISM

op•ti•mism/äptə,mizə
hopefulness and confidence a



Destiny

I'm just a 16 year old girl. People think of me as so much more than that though. I don't really see why or how. I fight for what I believe in. Everyone says I'm the strongest girl my age. I constantly ask myself why they view me like this. It makes me wonder if people just give up on their dreams these days. I am here at the Two Rivers Camp with other people like me protesting against a pipeline which could put a lot of things at risk. I journal every day and today I am sitting in a dried up river, now just a long dip of dirt and rocks. It makes me sad how much things can change. Just a few months ago, I was happily wading through this river, the water up to my knees as it washed my chalky feet and calves with its sparkling blue water. I'm now here in a parched valley. I got arrested a few days ago. I'm currently on probation just because I stood up for what I believe in. I chained myself to a bulldozer so they could not proceed construction on the pipeline. Now, a majority of the nation knows my name. People come and talk to me, inspired. I really do hope I actually inspire them to take a stand with me.

Haley Hordland



Shalini Thomas

Shalini Thomas is an immigration lawyer that talked to our class about the laws around citizenship, residency, and visas. She told us about the wait-time for Green Cards for Mexican citizens hoping for citizenship in the US, which at the moment is about 157 years and constantly growing. In Shalini Thomas's opinion, this impossible wait-time is the main reason that Mexicans illegally immigrate into the US. On top of the absurd wait-times for Green Cards, the path to citizenship is far too expensive for the majority of Mexican workers, costing tens of thousands of dollars to legal them.

She also explained to our group the difference between "sanctuary" cities and "secure" cities. Sanctuary cities don't allow immigration services to work with the police. This usually engenders a more trusting relationship between the police and the communities of undocumented immigrants. Secure cities mandate a citizenship check on anyone who is stopped by the police, whether it be for a speeding ticket or even for being witness to a crime. She explained how in these cities there is little-to-no cooperation between the police and undocumented communities because of the fear of deportation.

Tina Schellmaier





Greg Bamford

@gregbamford



Weekly faculty meeting at [@watershed_co.](#)
[#workhardplayhard](#)



3:30 PM - 7 Feb 2017

Improving Feedback Loops

- Coffees with each and every family before re-enrollment
- Putting Admissions on the Academic Leadership Team
- Monthly connections between Parent Association and Admin Team

Dear Parents,

I'm writing to you because your child was enrolled in "Rock 101" this term. I wanted to apologize for the quality of the course and to let you know what you'll be seeing on your child's end of term progress reports.

We've tried many experiments at Watershed as we've grown, and fortunately, most of them result in great learning experiences for kids. We're lucky to have many great part-time arts instructors who have enriched our program with other arts electives.

When we put this course on the schedule, our intent was to provide a course in instrumental music by partnering with an outside organization. Some students in "Rock 101" felt engaged and had a good experience. But I know that for most students, this class didn't feel well-organized, and it wasn't engaging day to day. We attempted to provide coaching and make adjustments mid-stream, but our interventions didn't succeed in making this class a successful experience.

Unfortunately, the instructors for "Rock 101" never responded to our calls and e-mails reminding them to submit final grades and narratives. As a result, we are giving every student an "accomplished" for the quarter, and you won't be seeing a narrative on your end-of-term progress reports. Their Spring Term assessment level will average the first quarter assessment with the "accomplished" for the second quarter.

I'm sorry for all of this. Ultimately, I am responsible for the quality of each and every course we offer, and you have the right to expect a higher level of quality in Watershed's programming.

100 students
100 stories

Investing Growth In Program



Brand is
what you do
every day.

Weekly Schedule 2017-2018

Middle School				
MS SKILLS I	MS SKILLS I	MS SKILLS I	MS SKILLS I	MS SKILLS I
8:10-9:05	8:10-9:05	8:10 - 8:50	8:10-9:05	8:10-9:05
		MS SKILLS II		
MS SKILLS II	MS SKILLS II	8:55-9:35	MS SKILLS II	MS SKILLS II
9:10 - 10:05	9:10 - 10:05	FRESH AIR	9:10 - 10:05	9:10 - 10:05
FRESH AIR	GATHERING		GATHERING	FRESH AIR
		MS SKILLS III		
MS SKILLS III	MS SKILLS III	9:50-10:30	MS SKILLS III	MS SKILLS III
10:20 - 11:15	10:20 - 11:15	Class Seminar 10:35-11:15	10:20 - 11:15	10:20 - 11:15
LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH
11:15-12:00	11:15-12:00	11:15-12:00	11:15-12:00	11:15-12:00
EXPEDITION	EXPEDITION	EXPEDITION	EXPEDITION	EXPEDITION
12:00 - 2:20	12:00 - 3:00	12:00 - 2:20	12:00 - 3:00	12:00 - 2:20
STEWARDSHIP 2:20-2:30				
MS MEETING/HS MEETING/ALL SCHOOL MEETING		ADVISORY		INTRAMURALS
2:30-3:10	STEWARDSHIP 3:00-3:10	2:25-3:10	STEWARDSHIP 3:00-3:10	2:25 - 3:10
EXTRA HELP*	EXTRA HELP*	EXTRA HELP*	EXTRA HELP*	EXTRA HELP*
3:10-3:30	3:10-3:30	3:10-3:30	3:10-3:30	3:10-3:30
MATH HELP	Staff Meeting	MATH HELP	CLUB PERIOD	
3:15-4:00	3:30-5:00	3:15-4:00	3:15-4:00	

High School				
HS SKILLS I	HS SKILLS I	HS SKILLS I	HS SKILLS I	HS SKILLS I
8:10 - 9:05	8:10 - 9:05	8:10 - 8:50	8:10-9:05	8:10 - 9:05
		HS SKILLS II		
HS SKILLS II	HS SKILLS II	8:55-9:35	HS SKILLS II	HS SKILLS II
9:10 - 10:05	9:10 - 10:05	FRESH AIR	9:10 - 10:05	9:10 - 10:05
FRESH AIR	GATHERING		GATHERING	FRESH AIR
		HS SKILLS III		
HS SKILLS III	HS SKILLS III	9:50-10:30	HS SKILLS III	HS SKILLS III
10:20 - 11:15	10:20 - 11:15	Class Seminar 10:35-11:15	10:20 - 11:15	10:20 - 11:15
LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH
11:15-12:00	11:15-12:00	11:15-12:00	11:15-12:00	11:15-12:00
EXPEDITION	EXPEDITION	EXPEDITION	EXPEDITION	EXPEDITION
12:00 - 2:20	12:00 - 3:10	12:00-2:20	12:00 - 3:10	12:00 - 2:20
STEWARDSHIP 2:20-2:30				
MS MEETING/HS MEETING/ALL SCHOOL MEETING		ADVISORY		INTRAMURALS
2:30-3:10		2:25-3:10		2:20 - 3:10
EXTRA HELP*	EXTRA HELP*	EXTRA HELP*	EXTRA HELP*	EXTRA HELP*
3:10-3:30	3:10-3:30	3:10-3:30	3:10-3:30	3:10-3:30
MATH HELP	Staff Meeting	MATH HELP	CLUB PERIOD	
3:15-4:00	3:30-5:00	3:15-4:00	3:15-4:00	

* teachers are available daily for questions, extra help, or parent conversations until 3:30pm.







WATERSHED
SCHOOL

HOME

ABOUT US

PROGRAM

ADMISSIONS

CURRENT FAMILIES



Program

REAL-WORLD
ACADEMICS

COMMUNITY LIFE

OUTDOOR EDUCATION

MAY TERM AND
GLOBAL STUDY

READY FOR COLLEGE
AND LIFE

MIDDLE SCHOOL

May Term is a unique, month-long course that integrates in-depth study of a complex topic with overnight travel across the country and the world. 6th graders begin with engaging regional trips and gradually advance to our high school global study program.



Authentic Voice



Brand is
what you do
every day.

There's no one right school
for every child.





CHARACTER TRAITS

7

.... OPTIMISM



..... GRATITUDE



..... CURIOSITY



..... GRIT



..... EMPATHY



..... SELF-CONTROL



..... SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE



WATERSHED
SCHOOL

COMMUNICATION

Communicators

Communicates
Well
- Written + Oral

well spoken

That they have
strong skills (writing,
reading, math, lang,
etc.) to communicate,
access information
and problem solve
effectively.

able to
clearly
express
well-supported
ideas

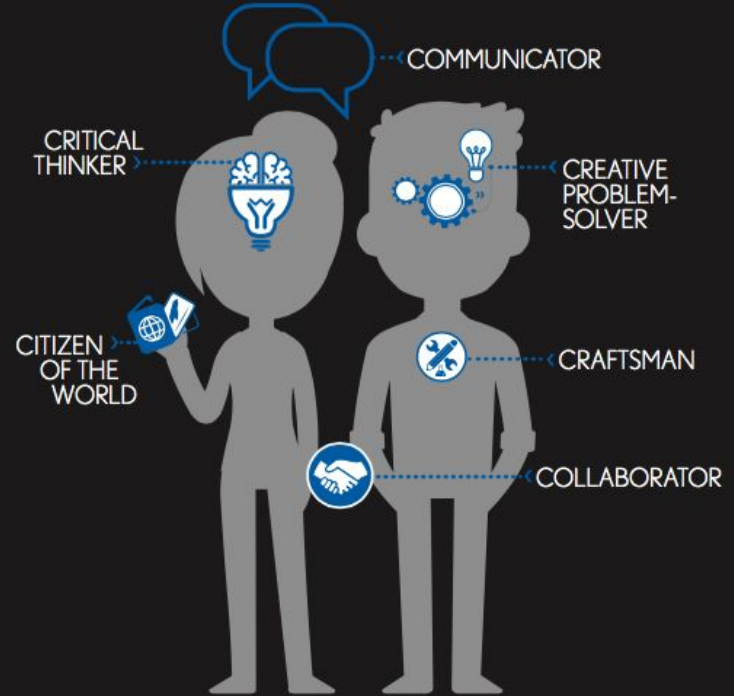
BE ABLE TO
ARTICULATE
THEIR THOUGHTS
- IDEAS BOTH
WRITTEN + ORAL

a listener,
someone who truly
hears others

understand
conflicts
and know how
to make
informed
opinions

PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE

A WATERSHED GRADUATE IS A...



WATERSHED
SCHOOL



MISSION STATEMENT

To spark adventure and wonder, foster inquiry and community, and build the **CHARACTER** and **ABILITY** of students to take on the world's greatest challenges.



CHARACTER TRAITS

7

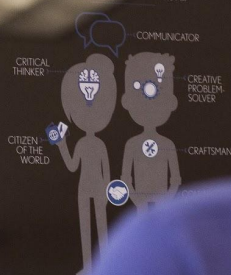
- OPTIMISM
- GRATITUDE
- CURIOSITY
- GRIT
- EMPATHY
- SELF-CONTROL
- SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE



WATERSHED
SCHOOL

PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE

A WATERSHED GRADUATE IS A...



3 beliefs parents will
either love or hate
about Watershed:

1. We have to get comfortable with being uncomfortable.

2. Who you are is as important as what you know.

3. College is not the most important part of high school.

Admissions

WHY STUDENTS
CHOOSE WATERSHED

WHY PARENTS
CHOOSE WATERSHED

IS WATERSHED RIGHT
FOR ME?

VIDEOS

VISIT WATERSHED

APPLY NOW

TUITION, FEES, AND
FLEXIBLE TUITION

REQUEST MORE INFO

We think learning from the real world works better, for most students, than learning from a textbook. But no school is right for everyone.

Here are some things you should know about our mission, and some ways to know if our program is the right fit for you or your child.

WE SPARK ADVENTURE AND WONDER.

Watershed students don't necessarily need to be "outdoorsy" or seasoned world travellers. However, they should be excited to explore and open to what's new.

THE RIGHT APPLICANT IS:

- Curious about the world
- Eager to go off campus
- Mature enough to work independently
- Ready for overnight trips away from home
- Able to adapt to new situations

WE FOSTER INQUIRY AND COMMUNITY.

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