

# An Education Embracing Discovery, Inspiration, and Innovation

**wns** | westside  
neighborhood  
school

Preschool | Elementary | Middle



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Belonging at WNS



# Discover

**WNS believes community is the foundation for nurturing innovative and creative thinking. Every day, we create meaningful opportunities for students of diverse backgrounds to collaborate and learn from each other. Our shared future benefits from their informed compassion.**

# Welcome



## Play, innovation, and a growth mindset as integral parts of a rigorous academic program

Combining the power of a growth mindset, the tools from a strong social-emotional program, and the opportunities to apply all of this to a nearly limitless range of learning experiences is essential to our commitment to educate children today for an unknown world of tomorrow. Our students are change agents with strong character who are equipped with the tools, inclination, and experience to make a positive difference. It starts in the Early Childhood Center (ECC), where children develop strategies for inclusion, conflict resolution, and a penchant for exploration. From the ECC through elementary and on to middle school, WNS students are intrinsically motivated to push their limits of academic understanding as they simultaneously engage in selfless enterprises.



### Welcome to WNS

It may seem like magic, but WNS is the product of applying design thinking with a highly passionate and talented faculty and staff who inspire children to reach, stretch, probe, challenge, and celebrate. We invite you to witness the magic that happens daily at Westside Neighborhood School for yourself.

*Brad Zacuto*

**Brad Zacuto**  
Head of School

The image features a split background. The left half is a solid, vibrant blue rectangle. The right half is a photograph of a bright blue sky filled with soft, white, wispy clouds. In the lower right quadrant of the sky, a small, dark-colored kite is visible, flying on thin white strings that stretch across the frame.

**At WNS We Teach as  
Much to the Heart as  
We Do to the Mind**

# Our philosophy is to provide innovative ways to encourage children to take responsibility for their own learning



ACADEMIC  
EXCELLENCE



CHARACTER



DIVERSITY,  
EQUITY,  
INCLUSION,  
& JUSTICE



COMMUNITY

The school's program is built on four pillars: Academic Excellence; Character; Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice; and Community. Faculty members model what they teach: respect and responsibility, love of teaching and joy of learning, sense of humor, open communication, and teamwork. Students are encouraged to be creative, independent, and self-disciplined. We believe in the importance of fostering resilience in our students and value perseverance, effort, and learning from our mistakes. WNS students understand the importance of community while respecting individual differences. Our goal is to instill in our students a love of learning, cultural sensitivity, and a deep understanding of our world both in and outside the classroom.



## Discovery-driven curriculum designed to empower

The WNS curriculum is supported by a foundation of current, research-based instructional practices. The program is challenging, engaging, and experiential at all grade levels. Drawing on student inquiry and prior knowledge, our hands-on, minds-on, project-based learning approach represents a synthesis of best practices. Our curriculum is designed to reach, inspire, support, and prepare every student for success.

As students develop competence in the essential academic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics, they are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning by setting goals, celebrating strengths, persevering through challenges, and stretching the boundaries of what seems possible. These core ideas are further integrated with science, social studies, technology, physical education, Spanish, visual arts, theatre, and music. Communication, collaboration, and reflection are fundamental parts of the WNS experience, supporting greater depths of understanding throughout the program.



### Meet Heidi

Our goals for students at WNS is for them to have a broad range of experiences at school and in the world. Whether it's stepping on the stage for the first time, trying a new sport, or traveling to another country, we want students to stretch, experiment, take healthy risks, and discover who they are.

*Heidi Reimann*

**Heidi Reimann**  
Assistant Head of School

A photograph of a man and a young girl sitting at a table, looking at a laptop. The man is on the left, wearing a dark blue polo shirt, and has his finger to his lips in a thoughtful gesture. The girl is on the right, wearing a black hoodie, and is pointing at the laptop screen. The background is a chain-link fence with colorful objects hanging from it. The text "Entrepreneurial Mindsets Inspired for Life" is overlaid in white, bold, serif font.

**Entrepreneurial  
Mindsets Inspired  
for Life**

## Preparing students for their world in the future

What makes the human mind so special (or unique) is its capacity to create, innovate, and transform. Ultimately, an education, and, therefore, a school, should be judged on its capacity to empower students with confidence and the tools students require to be agents of positive change. “Social Entrepreneurship,” as a guiding principle, embraces the full range of skills and tools, along with the mindset and moral maturity to become an agent of positive change in our world — a fundamental strategy of learning at WNS.

Whether we talk of a play-based curriculum in our early childhood program, explorations and design-code-make (DCM) activities in kindergarten and throughout the elementary years, or project-based learning in the middle school, we describe the steps on the journey to unleash a child’s natural sense of wonder, creativity, and innovation. Our strong academic curriculum cultivates tools needed for research, calculation, communication, and negotiation fostering successful facilitation of meaningful outcomes. Both our visual and performing arts programs are integral components in further engaging our students’ imagination and discovering ways to communicate beyond the written and spoken word. Our social-emotional learning (SEL) strategies integrated into daily curriculum add yet another vital dimension by giving students the social skills and tools to build a learning community based on civility, kindness, empathy, and ethical decision making.

“Social Entrepreneurship,” along with all of its complementary components, defines a PS-8th grade WNS education. Our graduates are confident and competent in their capacity to create the world they want with both the tools and a growth mindset poised to imagine solutions to problems they may not even yet know exist. We invite you to evaluate education by its highest standards, through the lens of social entrepreneurship and the capacity to innovate for the benefit of others. This is a WNS education.



### Creating Changemakers

‘Changemaker’ is a term we use frequently at WNS. A changemaker is not just a dreamer, but an action-taker, an innovator, and a leader, committed to bringing about societal change. It is our collective commitment that when a student graduates from WNS, they are equipped with the necessary skills and mindset to continue on their path to becoming exactly that. This begins even with our youngest students, who are introduced to the concepts of collaboration and innovation starting in our Early Childhood Center (ECC) and kindergarten. By the time they reach middle school, students are experienced problem-solvers. In their 7th and 8th grade capstone projects, students are challenged to not only identify a societal problem, but also to connect with community members, implement different strategies in search of workable solutions. The goal of these projects is to embody the spirit of our school’s mission statement: “to create a community of lifelong learners who... inspire the world with their curiosity, innovation, compassion, and stewardship.”







WIMS

# Early Childhood Center & Kindergarten

A photograph of a wooden playhouse and a small wooden structure. The playhouse is made of light-colored wood and has a gabled roof with a red interior. It has a ramp on the right side. Inside the playhouse, there are yellow and blue blocks, a blue table, and a black insect. A small wooden structure with a sign that says "Exploration in Progress" is in the foreground. The background shows a wooden shelf with various toys and blocks. The floor is covered with a patterned rug.

# Where the Journey Begins

Exploration  
in  
Progress

## A meaningful beginning with a collaborative approach

WNS embraces a progressive, child-centered approach to education that strives to fully develop the potential of each student intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically. Our early childhood program is play-based and rooted in social-constructivist, Reggio Emilia philosophy, principles, and practices. Simply stated, we learn better together. We believe learning is a collaborative process and that play is learning.

High-quality early childhood education provides the foundation for lifelong learning.

As a community of learners, we understand that knowledge is not individually constructed, but co-constructed. Skills that foster collaboration and communication develop in our social learning environment as we play, discover, and grow together.



### Meet Kelly

At WNS, our youngest children are able to embrace their natural curiosity and drive to learn. Young children are powerful learners, motivated to create theory and meaning, and to understand a complex and multifaceted world. We scaffold this joyful exploration through project-based and play-based learning. In kindergarten, we weave in more structured times for language arts, math, and specialist activities while maintaining our constructivist approach. Through open-ended experience and reflection, our young children will develop into resourceful, curious, and resilient adults. I look forward to sharing our unique and magical school with you.

*Kelly Massey*

**Kelly Massey**  
Director of Preschool-Kindergarten



## Engaging wonder through play-based learning

Through our emergent curriculum, children have a variety of opportunities to express their ideas in many languages, including drawing, sculpting, painting, music making, movement, construction, dramatic play, and shadow play. Children are able to explore their unique identities in an atmosphere of respect where each child is encouraged to share their stories and listen to each other's voices. The environment is our "third teacher," offering a nurturing, home-like setting with rich open-ended materials, natural light, and indoor/outdoor classrooms. Opportunities are created for children to explore their natural world, inside and outside. Our Early Childhood Center is filled with creative energy and caring spaces designed with children in mind.



### Play-Based Learning

Play is the work of young children! Nature has given human beings the intrinsic drive to test, experiment, pretend, and create. At the Early Childhood Center, we optimize this innate desire to understand the world through rich play-based learning experiences including mixing paint colors, constructing with blocks, and creating stream beds in the sandbox. Our skillful teachers create environments that support meaningful play and then provide scaffolding for the children as they reflect on those experiences.



## Kindergarten curriculum

Kindergarten is a progressive, play-based program that is driven by a constructivist philosophy, supporting the idea that children make meaning from asking questions and solving problems in their immediate environment. In addition to spacious and engaging classrooms, kindergarten students enjoy an outdoor learning center with a garden, working stream, sand area, and materials to explore, investigate, create, and play in an organic and authentic way. The scientific experimental model in our kindergarten curricula forms the basis for teaching and learning. Students are asked to hypothesize, test, and defend their ideas. They document learning using many different systems of artistic expression to both explain and investigate concepts.



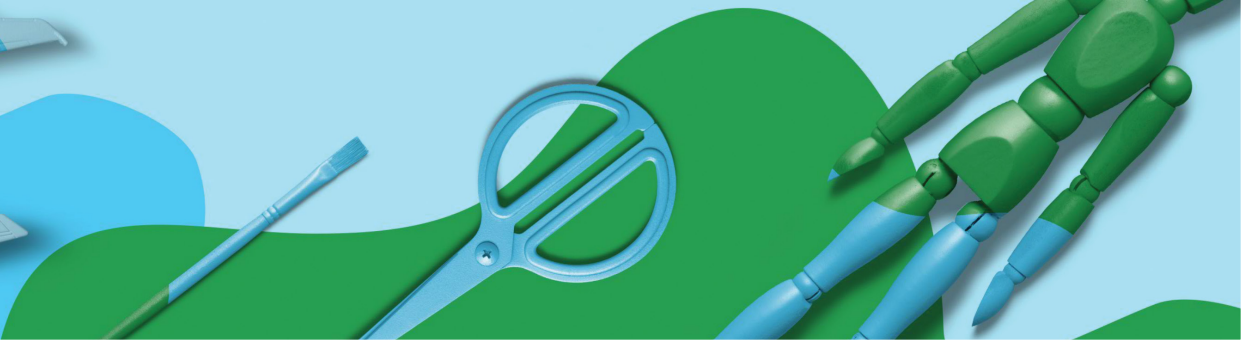
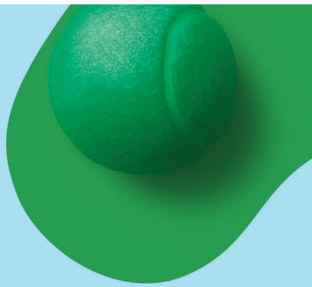
### Project Time

Project time is a time for children to put their active learning to use as they explore big ideas through play and materials. Long-term projects, such as our Family and Food Investigation, build the kindergartener's stamina to explore ideas over time.

Whether they are building with recycled materials, creating animal habitats out of clay, or exploring math concepts in the construction area, they are engaged in the kind of joyful, active learning that kindergarten students deserve.



wins



# Lower School

Grades 1-5



# Middle School

Grades 6-8



## Nurturing students' intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development

On any given day, WNS students are makers, thinkers, entrepreneurs, interpreters, observers, and investigators. At every developmental level, core academics blend seamlessly with specialized subjects, providing structure for ideation, creation, and collaboration. The foundation of our program is our approach to social-emotional learning and support. At WNS, every student is heard, seen, and known by their classmates, teachers, and community. Our custom-built social learning curriculum, along with Responsive Classroom and Developmental Designs, creates a supportive environment for students to reflect, grow, and develop as learners in the 21st century.



### Meet Tasha

WNS is a warm, safe, and nurturing environment fueled by a dynamic atmosphere of collaboration. Our students have compassion and kindness for one another. WNS students understand that they are growing up in a wonderfully diverse and pluralistic world. I am inspired by what they bring through the doors every day!

*Tasha Jackson-Jones*

**Tasha Jackson-Jones**  
Director of Grades 1-4



## Lower school curriculum

Elementary school studies are grounded in a progressive, social-constructivist learning approach that allows students to apply their learning in authentic ways. Student ideas and experiences create an innate desire to learn and practice core skills. Mathematical thinking, along with written and verbal communication, become critical when first graders create businesses for WNSville. Precision and organization in narrative and persuasive writing are necessary as second graders determine what it means to be a Changemaker. Reading and research skills form the foundation of the westward movement in third grade and global studies and student research projects in fourth grade. Fifth graders dive into identity and culture with their Cultural Fair, and learn what it means to put solutionary work into motion with their Sustainability Project, which will be built upon in middle school. Learning is supported through differentiated instructional groups, using collaborative and individual practice to allow for growth and stretch at every level.





# Making Meaning Through Authentic Experiences

**BYNE**  
Beach Volleyball National E

## The roadmap to academic excellence

WNS middle school students are makers, thinkers, and entrepreneurs. Integrated hands-on, minds-on projects are blended seamlessly with specialized core subjects, providing structure for ideation, creation, and collaboration.

Our middle school environment allows students to experience age-appropriate activities and events. Seventh and eighth graders are not caught in the middle, but take on the leadership role of “seniors.” At the same time they can be themselves, often remaining younger a bit longer and not as directly influenced by the social pressures common in high school. Young adolescents trying to establish themselves in a world of older students pushes them to grow up faster in order to fit in. In our Preschool-8 environment, emerging adolescents are given the nurturing and age-appropriate support they need for a healthy, confident transition to the high school years and beyond.



### Meet Kaitlin

Environment is a powerful factor in a student's middle school career. At WNS, we work hard to foster a supportive environment that focuses on really understanding and getting to know students, and from there, guiding them into becoming the best versions of themselves through opportunities, healthy challenges, and of course, love and fun.

*Kaitlin Rodriguez*

**Kaitlin Rodriguez**  
Director of Grades 5-8



## Middle school curriculum

Middle school is a departmentalized program where students engage in authentic learning experiences that help them develop their critical thinking, problem solving, and collaboration skills. Our program is academically rigorous while also embracing the power of mistakes and finding the right pace to support a wide range of learners. Over their time in middle school, our hope is to instill in our students an understanding of and confidence in who they are through engagement in our academic program, electives program, and extra-curricular opportunities.

Students take ten classes: English, math, science, social studies, Spanish, theatre arts, visual arts, music, Design-Code-Make, and physical education. There are opportunities for advanced classes in math and Spanish. Additionally, students participate in a wide variety of electives every afternoon that involve competitive teams like Mock Trial, Debate (2022-23 National Finalists) and Robotics (2022-23 State Finalists), performance-based electives like the Spring Musical or Dance, art-based courses like Ceramics or Digital Art, and interest-based courses like Service Elective or 3D Printing.



### From the Students

If I tried giving up I bet every single person in this school would want me to go further, and this is why I love WNS. You don't have to be close friends with a person to encourage them. WNS has shown me what the world is like and I am so grateful for all they have given me. WNS has carved me into the person you see today.

**Zai Williams**  
WNS Student



**Athletics**

**Visual & Performing Arts**

## Athletics at WNS

Students learn the lifelong skills of balancing schoolwork with athletics and become more resilient as individuals through the lessons learned by being a member of a sports team. At WNS, every student who wants to participate in athletics is encouraged to do so, and there is a team for everyone. WNS middle school teams participate in formal athletics including the Pacific Basin League, the Coastal Canyon League, and Delphic League.

Middle school students have the opportunity to participate in the following sports: softball, basketball, flag football, volleyball, track & field, cross country, and soccer. Our younger students (K-4) can begin their athletics journeys by participating in athletic clinics through our ACE (After-Class Enrichment) programs.



### JETS HIGHLIGHTS

- GIRLS BASKETBALL PBL CHAMPIONS 2025
- BOYS SOCCER PBL CHAMPIONS 2025
- BOYS CROSS COUNTRY PBL CHAMPIONS 2024
- BOYS BASKETBALL - 2025 FINALISTS
- BOYS FOOTBALL - 2024 FINALISTS
- GIRLS VOLLEYBALL GOLD - PLAYOFFS
- BOYS TRACK & FIELD 2024 PBL CHAMPIONS
- GIRLS TRACK & FIELD 2024 PBL CHAMPIONS

## Self-expression through creativity & communication

Students at WNS experience a rich curriculum of Visual & Performing Arts, providing the opportunity to develop empathy, self-confidence, public speaking, communication, and collaboration skills. The arts programs are organized around imagination, innovation, invention, observation, and expression. Students learn that art is a means to communicate feelings and ideas, to articulate what they think and know, to reflect upon issues, and to come to a clearer understanding of themselves, their culture, and other people. Lower school students participate in an active music and dance program with a variety of musical enrichment opportunities, and performances.

As students progress through middle school, they have the opportunity to follow their interests or try their hand at new skills. Sample middle school Visual & Performing Arts electives: Ceramics, Art Movements, Digital Art, Film Festival, Paper Maché, Drawing, Photomontage, Performing Arts Showcase, Dance, Musical Performance & Musical Tech, Instrumental Music, and Festival Choir.



# Culture, Community, and Belonging



## Nurturing a community where everyone belongs

At WNS, belonging begins with connection. From the moment students join our school, they are welcomed into a vibrant community rooted in trust, care, and a shared purpose. Relationships are at the heart of everything we do - among students, families, and educators - creating a culture where every child feels supported and inspired to grow. Through collaboration, mentorship, and daily moments of joy and discovery, students learn what it means to be part of something bigger than themselves. They develop the skills to listen with empathy, lead with kindness, and engage with the world around them thoughtfully and respectfully. WNS is a place where students grow not just academically, but as whole people - resilient, compassionate, and ready to contribute to their community. Here, belonging isn't a buzzword - it's the lived experience of every child, every day.



### Meet Martinique

At WNS, we encourage our students to show up as their most true and authentic selves, bringing to the community their beautifully varied backgrounds, experiences, and understandings. As a community of difference, we seek to celebrate and grow deeply in our diversity while using that which binds us to work toward a more equitable and just world. For it is under these conditions, ones that allow for the presence and acceptance of one's full self and the love and respect for all in our community, that beautifully magnificent learning can truly occur. This is the foundation of the WNS experience.

*Martinique Starnes*

**Martinique Starnes, Ed.D.**

Director of Culture, Community, and Belonging

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