



Woods Charter School
A Public School of Choice

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October 4, 2021

Dear Community of Woods,

One crystallized truth that has emerged from educational research over the past several decades has to do with the positive effects—in terms of both health and educational outcomes—of one trusted adult in the lives of children and adolescents. Students who feel connected to one trusted adult, a person outside of their home environment that they are able to know closely over time, prove to be generally more engaged and more resilient. They earn higher marks in school, score higher in emotional intelligence, get in trouble less often, and are less prone to illicit drug use and addiction. This “one trusted adult” research finding has proven to be a sturdy one in subsequent research. Kids, it seems, need other trusted adults (at least one!), not just their parents, to grow up strong and healthy.

Aside from the research, many people know this intuitively from experience. Many of us can point to a teacher, coach, professor, mentor, counselor who really “got us” and stood by our side through rough times. One person who served in the “one-trusted-adult” role for me was my wrestling coach Norm Wein. He was a big burly bear of a man. (You might try to picture the cross between a lumberjack, a grizzly bear, and, well, a wrestling coach.) Touchy-feely type he was not, but he had his own way of showing you that he was committed to you no matter what. In my first years of wrestling, I was really good at losing and really horrible at handling the humiliations of losing. I’m not sure why Coach Wein stood by me, but he did, and I always knew he had my back. In addition to being a coach, he was also a teacher at my school, so he had a natural way of keeping track of me and my teammates and would nudge—or grapple—us back on the path if he thought we were venturing out of line. I don’t know if his mentoring yielded better report card grades for me. I don’t know if he kept me from “risky behaviors.” But I do know his steady guidance and dependability allowed me to grow from being a pretty obnoxious, immature twerp into a . . . less obnoxious, good bit more mature, less twerpy twerp!

More seriously, Coach Wein and a few other specific teachers changed my life. I realized in high school what a positive effect their commitment had on my growing up, and it’s because of them that I chose a path in education.

If one, just *one*, trusted adult can have such a positive effect, it begs the question of what a whole schoolhouse full of trusted adults might be able to accomplish. It’s one of the very key questions we’re exploring at Woods. We know well that the only way to build an excellent school is to bring together the most amazing teachers in the land to grow it. Over the years we have worked hard to fill our classrooms with teachers who genuinely love what they do and have a deep

respect for the art of teaching. One of the chief joys of my job is being able to walk into any classroom on any given day and see these master teachers at work.

Another big joy of my job is listening to students as they come to the end of their time at Woods and hearing the deep levels of warmth and gratitude they hold for their teachers. These students speak as people who've had their lives changed.

Is it too much to ask of our teachers to be transformational life changers? No, I don't think it is. There's just too much at stake to settle for anything less. It does mean, though, that we as a school need to be deliberate and devoted in how we attract, support, and retain these life changers - and this is where we need the help of our Woods families.

In many ways, Woods is the school it is because the families of Woods have gone above and beyond to nourish the school with their work, their ideas, and their love. Of the many ways to help our school continue to evolve, one is through your participation in the Annual Fund. So much of what makes the dream of Woods vital has really nothing to do with money; however, we also know that to make Woods an amazing school, we must be able to continue filling our schoolhouse with teachers who are life changers. Then we must equip these life changers with the technology, curricular supports, and professional development that will empower them to do their very best work with our students . . . and these things *do* cost money.

As in past years, the three major designations for Annual Fund donations are . . .

- 1) **curricular supports:** textbooks, workbooks, lab equipment, art supplies, computer software, etc.
- 2) **faculty professional development:** summer institutes, workshops, graduate school classes, etc. to help our faculty continue their growth and learning.
- 3) **faculty salary supplement:** Charter schools receive lower funding than traditional public schools, and correspondingly Woods teachers earn a lower salary (by roughly \$3000-\$6000) than their public school counterparts. We would like to support our teachers by offering a salary supplement that attempts to bridge this gap.

Please continue to help steward the growth of Woods. We would like to avoid coming back to you again and again this year to ask for donations to the Annual Fund, so instead, we're asking everyone to make a pledge or donation during the week of October 11th – 15th. Please know that all amounts are greatly appreciated (and fully tax deductible), and I assure you that we will be careful and frugal with every dollar donated.

With gratitude and with hope,



Cotton Bryan
Principal