

Fostering Independence, Together



YWA Educational Insight Series

Mike Haykin, President and Head of Educational Programs

Dear Friends of Yellow Wood,

Over the past three decades of my career, I have had the opportunity and privilege to see young people grow from kindergarten through to graduate school settings, becoming young adults, parents and professionals.

Given this vantage point, I have witnessed learning, maturation, progress and achievements from students daily, over the arc of time. These observations shaped my understanding of learning and human development and have deeply influenced how I view the role of schools, educators and parents.

We are all growing. In my early sixties, I am still growing as a parent, even though my kids are educated and independently employed and insured. I continue to grow as an educator and as an administrator every day.

Students all grow physically, emotionally, cognitively, socially, morally and academically at different rates. Their growth is influenced by everyone in their lives and their life experiences, positive and negative. In our complicated and demanding world, independence is defined by an individual's capacity to establish their own values, priorities and goals, then take the steps needed to progress toward those goals. All while aligning actions and values.

Education needs to reflect the varied developmental realities, talents and interests of each individual to ensure that learning is done for and not to the individual.

Our collective role as educators and as parents is to help young people figure out who they are, what motivates and challenges them, and to facilitate access to people and opportunities. Also as adults, we must celebrate who they are becoming and serve as a counterbalance to the real and imagined pressures and expectations that interfere with knowing one's self.

Education needs to reflect the varied developmental realities, talents and interests of each individual to ensure that learning is done for and not to the individual.

Helping young people find their potential happens over a lifetime and it must move beyond academic content and skill development. Success is not the result of possessing knowledge and skills. Nor is success defined by singular accomplishments or end points.

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Success is achieved through a day-by-day experience of having a sense of purpose and meaning, making progress toward self-defined goals and building and maintaining healthy relationships, while triumphing over adversities, both large and small.

As educators, **we need to help students** answer the following questions:

- How do I define my own values?
- How do I align my actions with those values?
- How do I align my actions within community values?
- What do I do if my values run counter to a community that I am a member of?
- How do I respond to the very real conflicts that challenge aligning actions and values?
- How do I set short and long term goals?
- How do I reconcile competing priorities?
- How do I reconcile the real and imagined expectations that come from parents, educators, employers and partners?
- How do I learn to effectively respond to emotion and stresses that interfere with progress?
- How do I work with others?
- How can I learn to communicate and collaborate with people who have very different realities from my own?

YWA is committed to supporting students and young adults on their journey toward independence. We are also committed to working with parents and guardians to help them define how best to understand and support their child from childhood to early adulthood.

Even the most capable student's learning can be interrupted due to absence of instruction that works for the individual. As instruction is tailored to the strengths, style, interests and needs, effective learning occurs and confidence grows. We believe that relationships are the foundation of learning.

In order to best support growth we need to work collaboratively and understand the thoughts, feelings and subjective experiences of our students. We then need to work with that young person to explore their interests, define their goals, explore opportunities and define a plan to work toward achieving personal goals.

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We believe it is important part of our role to introduce students to people and experiences that can broaden opportunities to provide challenge.

YWA works to support students and young adults on their journey toward independence, but we also work with parents and guardians to help them define how best to understand and support their child from childhood to early adulthood. In this way, we foster independence, together.

Our commitment at Yellow Wood Academy is to help children, adolescents and young adults develop their dreams, plans, skills, strategies, values and healthy relationships in order to progress toward their respective goals.

As we grow and learn, goals often change. That is as it should be. Between any beginning point and goal or end point, there are an infinite number of other points along the way. The goal or end point signifies the start of a new journey.

Learning at Yellow Wood is about the journey and not the destination.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Haykin".

Mike Haykin

President and Head of Educational Programs