

WINGRA SCHOOL

An independent school, ages 5-14,
centrally-located in Madison, WI

A large, multi-story brick building with a central tower and arched windows, surrounded by trees with autumn foliage and a green lawn with fallen leaves. The building has a sign that reads "WINGRA SCHOOL".

NO TESTS.
NO GRADES.
JUST LEARNING.



YOU DON'T GRADE YOUR CHILD. WE WON'T, EITHER.

"Framing excellence in these competitive terms doesn't lead to improvements in performance. Indeed, a consistent body of social science research shows that competition tends to hold us back from doing our best. It creates an adversarial mentality that makes productive collaboration less likely, encourages gaming of the system, and leads all concerned to focus not on meaningful improvement but on trying to outdo (and perhaps undermine) everyone else."

-Why Can't Everyone Get A's?, The New York Times, June, 2019

WINGRA SCHOOL

A progressive school founded by
parents in 1972

**In 1970, five women with
backgrounds in the fields of
education and child development
petitioned the Madison School
District to change its practices. They,
and many other educators,
questioned the effectiveness and
benefits of traditional, adult-
centered practices in American
education.**



*Classrooms are not centered
around desks or hierarchy but
instead invite movement,
creativity, participation, and
collaboration.*

A photograph of a classroom scene. A teacher, a woman in a striped shirt, stands behind a table. A young boy in a dark shirt sits at the table, looking up at the teacher. Two girls are also seated at the table, one of whom is writing in a notebook. The table is covered with papers and a pencil. The background shows bookshelves filled with books.

**YOU LET YOUR
CHILD PLAY.**

**OUR
CURRICULUM
DOES, TOO.**

"Researchers have demonstrated that five-year-olds are spending more time engaged in teacher-led academic learning activities than play-based learning opportunities that facilitate child-initiated investigations and foster social development among peers....Focus on rules can diminish children's willingness to take academic risks and curiosity as well as impede their self-confidence and motivation as learners—all of which can negatively impact their performance in school and in later life."

*-Kindergarteners Get Little Play Time, Why Does it Matter?,
The Conversation, April, 2016*



Approaches to and contexts for learning shift based on student and teaching team collaboration.

WINGRA SCHOOL

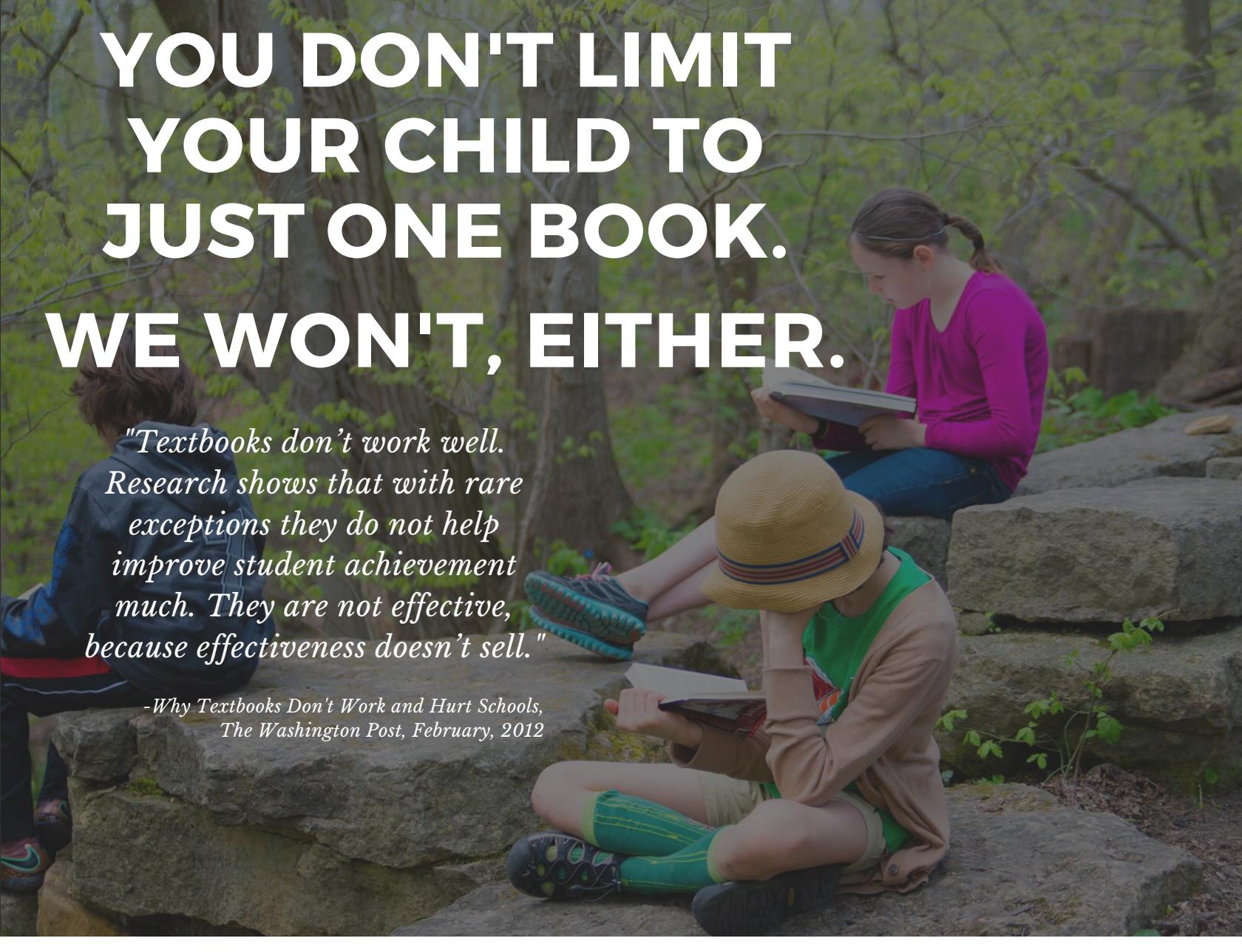
Multi-age groupings and integrated, responsive curricula that account for students' interests, needs, and development

At Wingra, we honor and emphasize the *process* of learning and create an environment in which children's strengths and unique ways of learning are supported. Our progressive educators are highly knowledgeable about child development and work to address the trends and challenges of modern childhood. With inquiry at the heart of our curriculum, we teach children to be thinkers, challengers, and wonderers.

YOU DON'T LIMIT YOUR CHILD TO JUST ONE BOOK. WE WON'T, EITHER.

"Textbooks don't work well. Research shows that with rare exceptions they do not help improve student achievement much. They are not effective, because effectiveness doesn't sell."

*-Why Textbooks Don't Work and Hurt Schools,
The Washington Post, February, 2012*





Curricula is designed to make students aware of the many communities of which they are a part and to get them out of the classrooms often.

WINGRA SCHOOL

No single primary source teaching; curricula not based on textbooks authored by white men

Education is a matter of experience. Learning at Wingra is an active, multi-sensory engagement that involves people with different resources and lenses. Wingra is fortunate to be located across from the UW Arboretum, down the block from Lake Wingra, and on the Madison Metropolitan bus route and Southwest Commuter bike path.



PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION

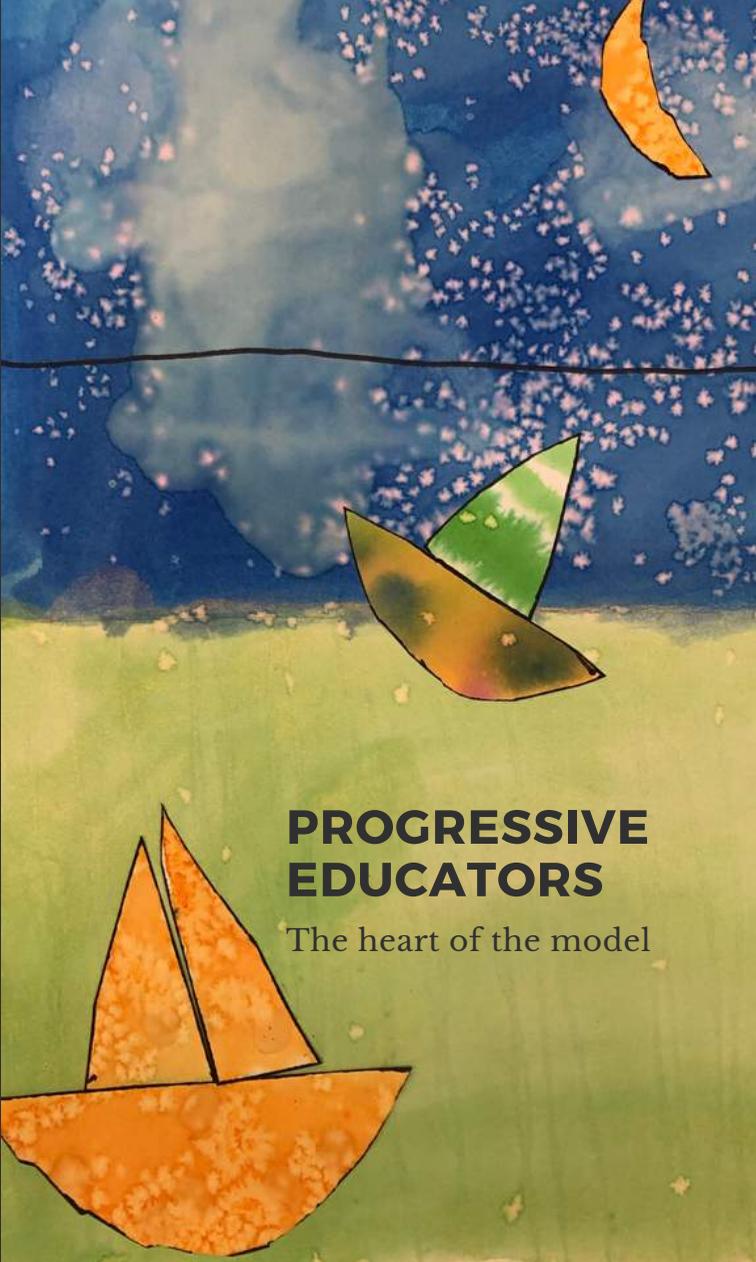
Excerpts from *Progressive
Education: Why it's Hard to Beat
but also Hard to Find*,
Alfie Kohn, 2008

Intrinsic Motivation: The first question that progressive educators are likely to ask is, "What's the effect on students' interest in learning, their desire to continue reading, thinking, and questioning?" Conventional practices, including homework, grades, and tests, prove difficult to justify for anyone who is serious about promoting long-term dispositions rather than just improving short-term skills.

Deep Understanding: Progressive education tends to be organized around problems, projects, and questions—rather than around lists of facts, skills, and separate disciplines. The teaching is typically interdisciplinary; the assessment rarely focuses on rote memorization, and excellence isn't confused with "rigor." The point is not merely to challenge students but to invite them to think deeply about issues that matter.

Active learning: In progressive schools, students play a vital role in helping to design the curriculum, formulate the questions, seek out (and create) answers, think through possibilities, and evaluate how successful they—and their teachers—have been. Their active participation in every stage of the process is consistent with the overwhelming consensus of experts that learning is a matter of constructing ideas rather than passively absorbing information or practicing skills.

It's not enough to offer elaborate thematic units prefabricated by the adults. And progressive educators realize that the students must help to formulate not only the course of study but also the outcomes or standards that inform those lessons. Progressive educators don't merely say they endorse ideas like "love of learning" or "a sense of community." They're willing to put these values into practice even if doing so requires them to up-end traditions. They will question things like honors classes and awards assemblies that clearly undermine a sense of community. Progressive schools, in short, follow their core values—bolstered by research and experience—wherever they lead.



PROGRESSIVE EDUCATORS

The heart of the model

Wingra educators **co-create developmentally appropriate curriculum** with their teaching team and with students, bringing their own creativity, insight, and love of learning into the classroom. Our teachers have a clear understanding of the **progressive philosophy** of the school and a strong commitment to it. Staff members **collaborate and engage democratically** to make decisions about most aspects of our program. Their dedication, expertise, and teamwork are what make progressive teaching practices possible at Wingra.

Our students interact fully with their teachers. Teachers and students are on a first-name basis at Wingra. The learning environment and the building of trust give the teachers great insight into their students' understanding and perspectives.

Our teachers know that when students feel seen, heard, valued, loved, and safe to be themselves, they are able to take risks in their learning, to challenge themselves, and to grow as people.

Our teachers model the behaviors and skills we hope for children to learn. Students see their teachers work collaboratively with one another. They see how teachers approach problem-solving and conflict, show empathy for others, and advocate for social justice. They see teachers themselves as lifelong learners,

14

Average teaching tenure, in years

12:1

Maximum student to teacher ratio

2.75

Average time spent outside per day, in hours

100%

Teachers involved in developing curricula

WINGRA SCHOOL

At a glance

Type of School: Independent progressive school serving elementary and middle-aged children; established in 1972.

School size: 110

Maximum student to teacher ratio: 12 to 1

Percentage students of color: 25%

Day begins: 8:30am. Soft start until 8:45am. Free Early Care, beginning at 7:45am.

Day ends: 3:15pm. Early release Mondays at 2:00pm. Extended Day program available all week until 5:45pm. The program includes club activities.

Curricula for all ages includes: Art, Library Studies, Literacy, Math, Music, Science & Engineering, Social Justice, Social Studies, Spanish, Technology, and Wellness.



MISSION STATEMENT

In service of...

LEARNING, we practice responsive and progressive education, and strive for equity.

THE WHOLE PERSON, we embrace unique gifts, experiences, and relationships.

SOCIAL JUSTICE, we foster responsibility, advocacy, and compassion.

DEMOCRACY, we nurture individual and collective growth.

THE WORLD, we cultivate curiosity, creativity, and innovation.

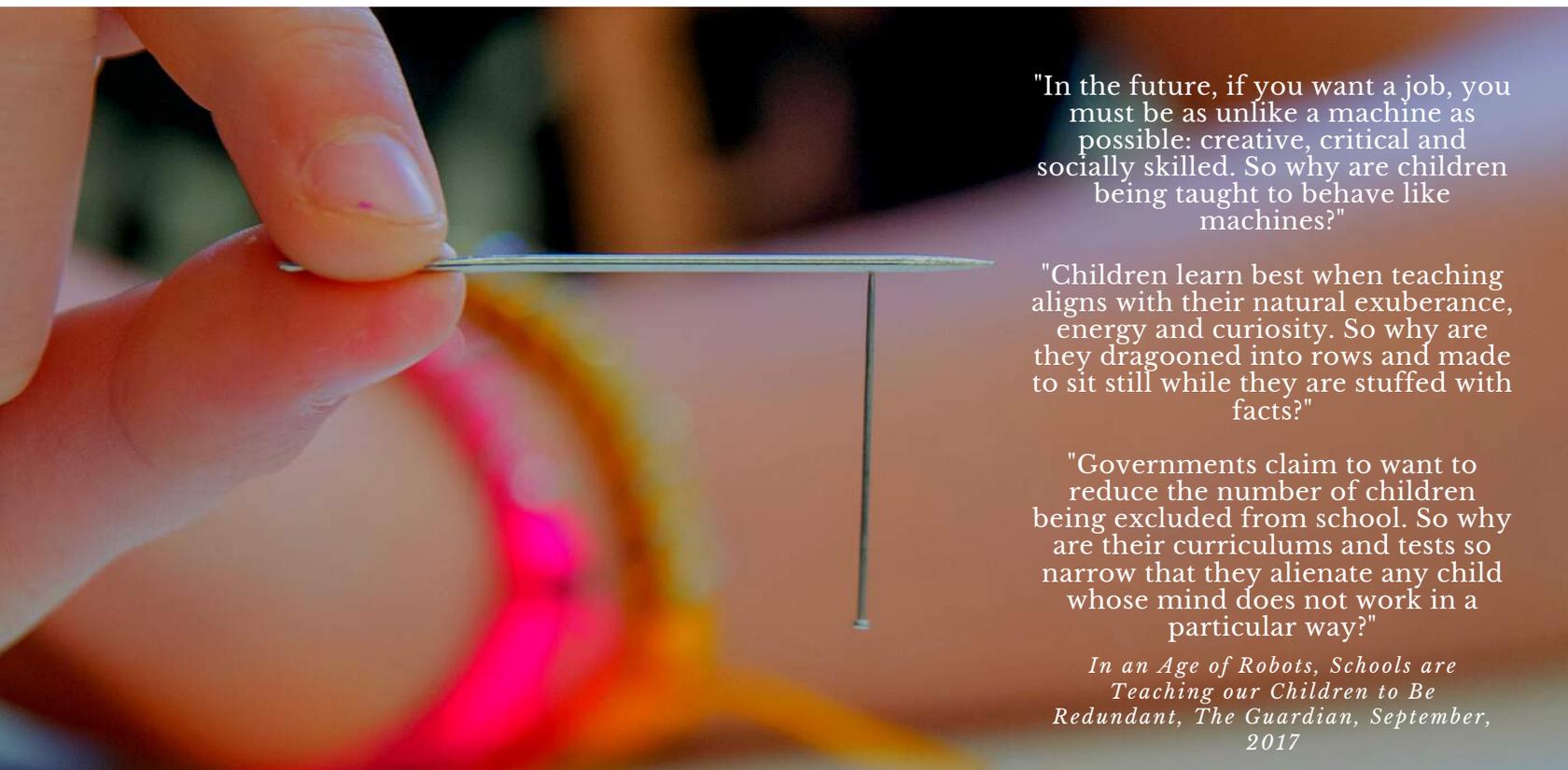


Participation becomes a societal norm when each person's contribution has been recognized, appreciated, and engaged. That appreciation of social justice becomes an initial condition for the transition into adult life.

-Wingra School website

THE TRANSITION

Wingra students transition to traditional high schools and colleges, and excel. Attend our annual **Alumni Night** in January to hear directly from them. Learn how their Wingra education shaped their high school, college, career, and life experiences.



"In the future, if you want a job, you must be as unlike a machine as possible: creative, critical and socially skilled. So why are children being taught to behave like machines?"

"Children learn best when teaching aligns with their natural exuberance, energy and curiosity. So why are they dragooned into rows and made to sit still while they are stuffed with facts?"

"Governments claim to want to reduce the number of children being excluded from school. So why are their curriculums and tests so narrow that they alienate any child whose mind does not work in a particular way?"

In an Age of Robots, Schools are Teaching our Children to Be Redundant, The Guardian, September, 2017