

PALO ALTO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Report to the Community 2007-2008



Ohlone Elementary School

School Description & Mission Statement

Ohlone Core Values

- Developmental Approach
- Climate of Trust
- Growth and Assessment
- Multidimensional Learning
- Meaningful, Relevant Curriculum
- Cooperation and Collaboration
- Teacher-Parent Partnership

School Profile

Ohlone School is one of twelve elementary schools in the Palo Alto Unified School District. As an officially designated district alternative school rather than a neighborhood school, Ohlone serves families from throughout Palo Alto, Stanford, and Los Altos Hills, as well as families from East Palo Alto and Menlo Park who participate in the Voluntary Transfer Program. Attendance rates are high; non-excused absences average less than 1%. Children are admitted to Ohlone via an equal access drawing (lottery) which takes place the February prior to August entrance. Once siblings and children participating in the Voluntary Transfer Program have been accommodated, all available kindergarten spaces are filled from the equal access drawing. Parents are required to attend an orientation session prior to making a commitment to Ohlone's guiding principles and practices.

Out of 421 students, 51% are girls and 49% are boys; 25% of the children represent racial or ethnic minorities (58.1% White-Not Hispanic, 15.6% Asian-American, 4.3% Latino-American, 1.7% African-American, .2% Pacific Islander, and 20.1% other). Collectively, in addition to English, Ohlone families speak more than 28 different languages at home.

School Goals

Goal 1a: Ensure academic growth and achievement and appropriate level of challenge for all students so that every student makes at least a year's growth each year.

Goal 1b: Close the achievement gap among students in different racial/ethnic groups by 20% each year as measured by individual student gains on multiple measures.

Goal 1c: Foster social-emotional-physical health and resilience in every student as measured by improved student behaviors.

Goal 1d: Provide diverse avenues for student success that honor the unique talents and abilities of each student.

Student demographics, testing and accountability data, class size, staffing and financial information are available in the state-mandated School Accountability Report Cards. These may be found on the PAUSD Web site: <http://www.pausd.org/community/about/sar.shtml> or obtained at your school. Similar information, current and historical, about individual schools and school districts is also available on the California Department of Education Web site: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/>.

Practices

Learning: Teachers encourage students to make responsible decisions regarding what to study, what resources to use, and how to evaluate their learning. Teachers are guides and facilitators. Students are encouraged to initiate and follow through on projects. We emphasize hands-on learning. Lessons commonly integrate multiple subjects. Homework is an extension of classroom curriculum, not a separate, add-on activity.

Environment: Classes feature multiple grades. The atmosphere is relaxed and informal. Classrooms offer the freedom to move around, talk, and share. Teachers design activities that promote cooperation and collaboration. A safe, non-judgmental environment provides opportunities for students to take risks and express themselves. We encourage participation of older and peer student tutors, parents and community members in classrooms.

Assessment and Growth: Teachers help students set appropriate goals. Students progress at their own level and rate. Parent-teacher conferences and written evaluations replace grades and report cards. Students receive support to develop positive social interactions and productive relationships. Students serve as role models for one another. Students and staff participate in making decisions and rules that directly concern them.

Parent-Partnership: Parents involve themselves in school/classroom activities. We use the talents of parents and community members to support and enrich school programs. Parents participate in decision-making and policy formation. Teachers, staff, administrators, and parents accept and support the Ohlone philosophy.

Instructional Staff

The certificated staff consists of 21 classroom teachers; 4 specialists (Resource Specialist, Speech/ Language Specialist, Reading Specialist, English Language Development Specialist); and one part-time Librarian. The Ohlone counseling staff consists of one part-time School Psychologist and one counseling intern. There are 29 certificated individuals (26 women, 3 men), 7 are beginning teachers (1-6 years of service), 9 are mid-career (6-15 years of service), and 8 are veteran teachers (15-30 years of service). In addition to the certificated staff, Ohlone has a support (classified) staff of 2 administrative assistants, 2 custodians, 21 classroom aides (of whom 7 are Ohlone parents), and one Farm aide. Two (2) part-time math specialists assist both struggling and advanced children in mathematics.

Ohlone maintains the district pupil-teacher ratio of 22:1 in grades 4-5. The adult-child ratio is lowered considerably by the regular participation of parents and community volunteers who work side by side with classroom teachers and paraprofessionals.

Class size reduction has enabled us to create seven K-1 and seven 2-3 classrooms with 20 students, and seven 4-5 classrooms with 22 students. All classrooms at Ohlone provide multi-age, multi-graded environments; children usually remain with their teachers for two years.

The Ohlone Kids Club, operated by Palo Alto Community Child Care, provides an on-site program for Ohlone families who seek after-school care for their children. OKC currently serves children from more than 85 families, and is open from kindergarten dismissal until 6:00 p.m. on school days and from 7:30 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. on most school holidays. OKC is located in two portable buildings adjacent to the Ohlone Library.

Ohlone Elementary School

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www.ohlone.pausd.org

Principal Susan Charles
School Secretary Barbara Portman
Typist Clerk Chrys McCulloch
Custodians Gilbert Cordera
Lina Castaneda

Certificated Staff

K/1 Adrienne Brimer
K/1 Martha Gates
K/1 Karen Kitayama
K/1 Frankie Murray
K/1 Kim Prescott
K/1 Nancy Shorum
K/1 Lisa Suyemoto
2/3 Suzy Anvar
2/3 Julie Bagniefski
Avery Olesen
2/3 Arlene Gordon
2/3 Cindy Halstead
2/3 Monica Lynch
2/3 Ashley McCrea
2/3 Juliana Trapp
4/5 Melaine Chang
4/5 Rick Ehrhorn
4/5 Terri Feinberg
4/5 Otak Jump
4/5 Bill Overton
4/5 Christie Price
4/5 Janice Stone

Support Staff

Resource Specialist Renee Alloy
Speech/Language Jennifer Zine
Reading Specialist Marion Odell
Psychologist Margaret Sachs
Library Media Teachers Susan Scott
English Lang. Learner (ELL) Katherine Scott
SDC Hanna Miller

PTA President

Kathy Schroeder

School Safety Plan

The Basic Ten for School Safety:

1. Respect ourselves and each other.
2. Treat others as we would like to be treated.
3. Be caring, friendly, and nice to each other.
4. Include people in games and discontinue lockouts.
5. Be kind and considerate to plants and animals on the Farm and in classrooms.
6. Act safely and responsibly.
7. Respect school's and other people's property.
8. Solve problems and talk among ourselves before we turn to an adult for help.
9. Use common sense and make good decisions.
10. Trust our own judgment.

Opportunities for Parental Involvement

Parents play an integral part in the Ohlone learning community: by volunteering in the classroom or on campus, coordinating activities or special events, working as PTA officers or committee chairs, serving on the Ohlone School Site Council, or by participating as members of districtwide advisory committees, Core Values Committee, Farm Council, or the PTA Council.

Parents volunteer an average of 22,000 hours per year at school assisting children, making appearances as guest teachers, driving on field trips, arranging classroom celebrations, and taking part in schoolwide work days on the Farm, in the Multi-Purpose Room, or on the play structure. Parents help maintain Ohlone traditions such as the Harvest Festival, Family Bingo Night, Jazz/Auction, Family Orchestra Night, the Ohlone Book Faire, and Spring Picnic, and create new events, e.g. Science, Math, and Literary Nights, that contribute to and strengthen our growing sense of community. Room parents coordinate goings-on for every classroom.

Annually, Ohlone reviews and reassigns duties to every staff member around our disaster plan. Other than holding regular earthquake and fire drills, the district restocks our emergency supplies and equipment. Students are educated on proper safety procedures and our teachers and classified staff receive annual training in First Aid and CPR.

Other than the Basic Ten for Students and Parents, regular class meetings to discuss appropriate in and out of class behaviors are commonplace at Ohlone. The Ohlone Guides, a cadre of Fifth Graders, are trained to be responsive to the needs of the younger children. Parents and classroom aides are hired to be yard duty monitors at the lunch hour. The Site Council reviews and updates the School Safety Plan each year.

School Instruction & Leadership

The principal, Susan Charles, has served Ohlone for the past eight years. In addition to her time at the elementary level, Mrs. Charles also worked in the high school for over fifteen years, served one year in the district office and another year at middle school level. She is also an adjunct professor at the University of Santa Clara, teaching new school administrators. The principal has a collaborative style and believes in involving all sectors of the community in the decision-making process. Our student council, PTA, Site Council, Core Values Committee, Farm Council, School Secretary, and teacher leaders are active participants with the principal in all major decisions.



School Programs & Practices That Promote a Positive Learning Environment

Learning Environment — Ohlone School provides a relaxed, informal atmosphere for students and teachers; the instructional program is characterized by hands-on teaching and learning experiences that promote the growth of the whole child. Teachers serve as guides and facilitators of the learning process more often than as presenters of information or designers of products. Students progress at their own rate and learning generally reflects the depth, rather than breadth, of their understanding and knowledge. Students feel comfortable interacting with the adults at

school, and they are equally comfortable working independently or cooperatively.

Ohlone encourages mutually respectful relationships among students and between students, teachers, and other adults. Teachers commit part of every day to foster positive, productive human relationships. Students demonstrate enthusiasm for learning and pride in the school because of their active involvement and participation in many of the decisions that affect them; rules are democratically developed and enforced. There is schoolwide recognition of each

student's unique value and special contributions to the overall community; as a result, students perceive Ohlone as both a desirable place to be and a safe place in which to take risks. In 2006-2007 Ohlone had zero suspensions and zero expulsions.

Ohlone students have many opportunities to develop decision-making skills and to take responsibility for themselves, including participating in daily class meetings; serving as class representatives to schoolwide councils and by working as classroom assistants or tutors with younger children.

Ohlone School focuses on the knowledge and processes students need to be successful, active participants in school and in the community, and productive citizens later in life. Projects and activities serve to integrate several curricular areas at once. Our classrooms provide experiences in art, music, health and physical education in addition to the core academic subjects of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Reading, writing, listening, and speaking are incorporated throughout the curriculum. Teachers enhance ongoing classroom experiences with simulations, joint projects, and frequent field trips, including overnight trips for older children. The Ohlone Farm serves as a living laboratory for science activities as well as a natural place to integrate art, language arts, math, and nutrition. Ohlone teachers regularly collaborate on projects and activities that classes can develop together.

Three programs unique to Ohlone are the CARE Program, the Ohlone Farm, and Ohlone Guides. The CARE Program offers parent education, a library for parents, and an ongoing series of meetings for students who might benefit from a variety of small group, skill-building activities. The Ohlone Farm provides first-hand opportunities for students to experience the care and feeding of plants and animals and to integrate farm life into their classroom experiences. Ohlone Guides are fifth graders who choose to provide service to the Ohlone community in a variety of ways, including raising and lowering our flags, helping kindergartners wait for their bus or walk to day-care, working in the office or the library, or acting as crossing guards.

"As an Ohlone parent, I am just as excited as my son about the campus' climate and feel. Ohlone has discovered a formula for making education fun and exciting. The staff also

manages to keep the rigor of basic learning most any learning institution can deliver. The key to making this difference is the sense of community. Parent participation is simply not implied, it is essential and well represented by many activities that contribute to the environment. Walking on the Ohlone campus prior to class is a great experience. You can sense the relaxing environment and friendliness many schools strive to create."

"The students feel comfortable interacting with adults and their peers. Interaction and self-paced learning create an independent yet highly cooperative setting. The project approach to learning is one of the most beneficial and unique approaches applied to learning at Ohlone. Where was this approach when I grew up? To me, this is more natural and realistic than a driven curriculum punctuated by recess. Learning occurs in the integration of all disciplines into real world projects. The students receive a more practical application of coursework, problem solving and collaboration. Wow! This is a powerful way to learn! It is similar to a college campus for elementary school children. What better way to prepare for the future."

Special Needs — Children in a Special Day Class (K-3), with developmental disabilities are part of the Ohlone community. As much as possible, we try to integrate them into the larger community as the I.E.P. stipulates. A couple of the students are mainstreamed for music and physical education and for some special projects in the regular classrooms. Other children with special needs have opportunities to work with a Reading Specialist, a Resource Specialist, a Language/Speech Specialist, an English Language Development Specialist, primary language tutors for students whose first language is not English. Our School Psychologist and counseling intern work with children on behavioral and social issues.

Teaching a differentiated curriculum, in multi-age classrooms, meets the needs of all learners. The teacher is able to expand and modify lessons to meet the needs of the gifted. Our Spectra Art teachers provide many opportunities for the children to express their creativity through the visual arts. Physical Education is as important to us as the other academic areas. We expand our science program by working with the Junior Museum. In teaching to the whole child, we find myriad ways to meet their academic, physical, social, and emotional needs.

The Basic Ten for Effective Parent - Teacher Communication

1. Model the Ohlone philosophy for your child in all interactions with students, parents, faculty, and staff.
2. Make every effort to ensure the optimal health and safety of all our children.
3. When volunteering in the classroom, follow the stated guidelines given to you by the teacher and respect the privacy of each child.
4. Observe the time frames and appointment schedules set by the teachers to contact them about your business.
5. If you have a concern, express it as soon as possible directly to the teacher before contacting other staff or parents.
6. Give the teacher the benefit of the doubt as a professional to be consulted.
7. Communicate in a problem-solving manner with teachers, parents, and other school personnel.
8. Ask questions for clarification before making assumptions.
9. Coach your child on how to approach the teacher directly to resolve a problem if possible before you get involved.
10. When differences arise, use existing channels and conflict resolution tools outlined in the Parent's Handbook..