

## Farm & Community

### The Ohlone Farm

The Ohlone Farm is an integral part of our school and instructional program. The Farm includes a vegetable garden, orchard, native habitat, greenhouse, animal paddock (which houses sheep, goats, and chickens), and an outdoor science classroom. On the Farm, students participate in hands-on projects in the sciences, arts, math and social studies. The Farm helps foster an awareness of and respect for the environment, cooperative learning, and personal responsibility.

The Farm is run by **parent volunteers** and is wholly funded by donations and grants. Parents lead the Farm Council, manage a weekly farmer's market to help fund the farm, and care for the animals in the evenings, on weekends and holidays. **Every family** is expected to help maintain the Farm by participating in Farm Work Days, held throughout the school year.

### Parent Involvement

At Ohlone, we believe in the unique contribution of every child and family. Parents, teachers and staff work together to support the school and each child. We strive for every family to **feel a sense of belonging at Ohlone**. To that end, parents are active participants in **all** aspects of the school.

On a school-wide basis, parents participate in Site Council, the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), Core Values Committee, and Farm Council. Parents are also asked to volunteer at the classroom level, helping with projects, small group learning centers, or at weekly Farm, Library, Art, and P.E. sessions. Parents run the many school-wide fund-raising and social events each year and are a vital part of supporting and teaching our Core Values.

## Enrollment

Ohlone is a "choice" school in the **Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD)** and includes two programs: English-only Ohlone and Mandarin Immersion Ohlone. Admission to either program is granted through a lottery, held annually in March. There are separate lotteries for each of the two programs.

There are 5 steps to follow to enter the Ohlone lottery:

- 1. Register your student with PAUSD**  
Your child **MUST** be registered with PAUSD prior to entering the Ohlone lottery. Information and forms are on the PAUSD website. You **must** register your child by the Priority 1 registration deadline in order to be eligible for the first lottery draw in March..
- 2. Read about our school**  
The Ohlone website has information about our school philosophy, our Core Values, the Goals of an Ohlone Education, the Mandarin Immersion program, and more.
- 3. Attend a Prospective Parent Meeting**  
Parents are required to attend an information session about Ohlone **before** applying to the lottery. Dates are listed on our website.
- 4. Observe Ohlone classrooms**  
Sign up on our website to visit the school, tour classrooms and observe instruction.
- 5. Return paperwork to the Ohlone office**  
Return all paperwork, including lottery card and intra-district transfer form to the Ohlone school office by the deadline listed online.

## Palo Alto Unified School District



## Ohlone Elementary School

**Louise Nicki Smith - Principal**  
Ohlone Elementary School  
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## Overview and Core Values

Ohlone Elementary School has been operating as a “choice” school in the Palo Alto Unified School District since 1976. Ohlone offers an “open education” approach characterized by:

- **Multi-age classrooms:** students are grouped by age (5-7, 7-9, 9-11) into K/1, 2/3 and 4/5 classrooms and stay with one teacher for two years.
- **Developmental approach to teaching and learning:** students progress along a 2-year curriculum, often in small groups, with teachers facilitating and coaching.
- **Integrated, project-based curriculum:** content of different subjects is combined and taught through long-term, hands-on projects.
- **Emphasis on the whole child:** social, emotional, physical, and intellectual growth are all of equal importance.

Ohlone’s Core Values form the basis of our educational and community structure. Our values state that:

- We operate with trust, respect, honesty, and we take personal responsibility
- Coursework acknowledges the developmental level of each student
- Assessment measures individual growth and development over time
- Students face challenges and failures as opportunities to learn
- We teach to the whole child in every classroom, every day
- Students cooperate and collaborate, teach and learn, throughout the day
- Students, teachers, and parents work together to support the children and school programs.

## Educational Priorities

At Ohlone, we structure our classrooms, daily routines and curriculum to develop the **whole child** – integrating social, emotional, physical and intellectual learning. We adhere to the California Common Core standards for academic content, but our pacing reflects the needs of the individual child and our content is highly integrated.

In the course of daily academic instruction, we strive to develop the following attributes:

- **Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy** – Our children will have a positive self-image, know their strengths and challenges, and be able to advocate for themselves.
- **Independent Thinking** – Our children will have a growth mindset, think for themselves and take responsibility for their own learning.
- **Tolerance and Compassion** – Our children will show compassion for others, value different perspectives, and act responsibly at all times.
- **Lifelong Learning** – Our children will view learning as a lifelong process; they will be resilient and be comfortable taking risks.
- **Citizenship and Community** – Our children will understand their place in the global community and care about the environment.



## Practices

### Teaching & Learning

- Testing and test scores are downplayed; students are not given grades. Assessment is an on-going process of observation and reflection, based on individual goals, growth and self-improvement.
- Homework is given as an extension of the curriculum or to complete classroom work, not on a routine basis.
- Students are expected to make responsible decisions regarding their learning, time management and social behavior throughout the day, in and outside the classroom.
- Students are encouraged to initiate projects, ask questions, take risks and pursue individual passions in their academic work.

### Classroom Environment

- The school atmosphere is relaxed and informal; everyone is on a first-name basis.
- Classrooms offer the freedom to move around, talk, and share; “brain breaks” are offered frequently.
- Teachers design activities to promote **cooperation and collaboration**; most work is done in groups.
- A safe, non-judgmental environment provides opportunities for students to take risks and express themselves.
- Bells are not used to signal the start or end of class time; instead, students are responsible to monitor their environment and make good decisions about using their time.