



INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH

Information for Families

Los Padillas Bilingual Environmental STEM Magnet
& Community School



Welcome to learning at Los Padillas! We want families to understand what makes our school unique and what your child's learning experience will look like. At Los Padillas, Environmental STEM and Dual Language education are woven together into one instructional approach. Our goal is for students to become strong learners, bilingual communicators, problem-solvers, and active members of their community.

Learning Through Environmental STEM + Dual Language

At Los Padillas, students learn in Spanish and English while exploring meaningful questions and real-world ideas. Rather than treating language, science, math, reading, and other subjects as completely separate, teachers look for opportunities to connect learning across subjects.

Students may read and discuss an environmental issue, use mathematics to analyze information, conduct a science investigation, design a solution, and then explain their thinking through speaking and writing. Throughout these experiences, students develop their academic Spanish and English while building the knowledge and skills they need to be successful.

Our students are encouraged to ask questions, investigate, collaborate, create, communicate, and try again. Making mistakes and learning from them is an important part of the learning process.

Sustaining the Future: Our Magnet Theme

Sustaining the Future is the theme that connects our learning experiences across the school.

Students explore how people interact with the environment and how we can use knowledge, creativity, and innovation to make our communities and our world better. Learning may connect to our local South Valley community, our school campus, or larger environmental challenges.

Because of this theme, students often experience learning that goes beyond a textbook or worksheet. They are encouraged to ask questions about the world around them and apply what they learn to authentic situations.

What Learning Looks Like

You may see your child working with classmates to investigate a question, discussing ideas in Spanish and English, building a model, collecting information outdoors, solving a problem, writing about their learning, or testing and improving a design.

This approach is called inquiry-based learning. Instead of always beginning with an answer, students often begin with a question or problem. Teachers guide students as they investigate, make connections, gather evidence, and develop their own understanding.

We also emphasize STEM design and problem-solving. Students learn that a first idea does not always work—and that is okay! They learn to test, revise, improve, and try again. These experiences help develop curiosity, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and perseverance.

Our Campus Is Part of the Classroom

One of the things that makes Los Padillas special is that learning does not stop when students leave their classroom.

Our 5-acre Wildlife Sanctuary provides students with opportunities to observe nature, investigate ecosystems, collect data, and learn about environmental stewardship. Students can experience science and environmental concepts firsthand rather than only reading about them.

Our Colaboratorio is a hands-on space where students can design, build, create, and solve problems. The Digital Lab gives students opportunities to explore technology, coding, robotics, digital creation, and computational thinking.

Students also participate in Genius Hour, where they have opportunities to explore topics that interest them, conduct research, and create projects that demonstrate their learning.

Throughout the year, students share their learning through Showcases, giving families and community members the opportunity to see, experience, and celebrate what students have created and discovered.

Project Lead the Way

Los Padillas uses Project Lead the Way (PLTW) to provide students with engaging STEM and engineering experiences. Through PLTW, students are presented with problems and challenges that require them to think, design, build, test, and improve.

PLTW is connected to our broader instructional approach rather than being an isolated program. Students use their literacy, mathematics, science, communication, and problem-solving skills as they work through these experiences.

What Does It Mean to Be a Magnet School?

As an Environmental STEM Magnet School, our instructional theme is an important part of who we are. We participate in a national magnet school certification process that recognizes schools for developing strong, innovative, theme-based programs.

For families, this means that our Environmental STEM focus is more than a school label. It is reflected in what students learn, how they learn, the experiences available to them, and the ways we connect learning to the world around them.

Our teachers work together to ensure that students experience a consistent and meaningful Environmental STEM program as they progress through Los Padillas.

Learning With Our Community

Los Padillas is also a Community School, which means we believe schools are strongest when families, educators, community organizations, and local partners work together.

Our students' families and community are important sources of knowledge, culture, experience, and support. We look for opportunities to connect classroom learning to our community and to bring community partners and authentic experiences into students' education.

Families are an important part of the learning process. We welcome opportunities for you to share your knowledge, culture, experiences, and ideas with our school.

A School That Supports Every Learner

Our teachers are supported by a team of instructional specialists who work together to strengthen learning for all students. Our Teaching and Learning Coach supports instructional planning, assessment, and teaching practices. Our STEM Implementation Coach helps teachers integrate Environmental STEM and PLTW experiences. Our Bilingual Coach supports strong Spanish and English instruction and the development of biliteracy. Our Student Systems Support Coordinator supports positive student behavior, engagement, and systems that help students be successful. Our Naturalist Teacher brings expertise in environmental learning and outdoor education.

These supports allow our teachers to continually grow and provide students with high-quality learning experiences.

What You Can Expect to See at Los Padillas

When you visit your child's classroom or attend a school Showcase, you may notice that learning looks different from a traditional classroom. Students may be talking, questioning, building, investigating, writing, creating, or working together to solve a problem.

You will see students using Spanish and English to communicate their thinking, engaging with challenging content, and applying what they are learning in meaningful ways.

Our teachers use ongoing assessment to understand what students know and what they need next. This allows instruction to be adjusted so that students receive the support and challenge they need to continue growing.

Our Promise to Families

At Los Padillas, we want every child to leave our school with more than academic knowledge. We want students to see themselves as capable learners, bilingual communicators, creative thinkers, problem-solvers, and contributors to their community.

Through Environmental STEM and Dual Language education, we give students opportunities to understand their world, communicate across languages, solve meaningful problems, and imagine ways to Sustain the Future.

At Los Padillas, the world is our classroom, our languages are our strengths, and our students are the future.