

Farm & Community

The Ohlone Farm

The Ohlone Farm is a vital and 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. Students participate in hands-on projects on the Farm in science, art, 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 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 at Ohlone.

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

Mandarin Immersion Program

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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 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

Mandarin Immersion Curriculum

Ohlone’s Mandarin Immersion program is designed to enable students to acquire proficiency in two languages by integrating native English speakers and native Mandarin speakers in content and literacy instruction in both languages. Language is acquired and developed by **using it as a means for instruction, not the object of instruction.**

The goals of the Mandarin Immersion program are bilingualism and biliteracy, high levels of academic achievement in both English and Mandarin, and positive cross-cultural attitudes. Several studies demonstrate that students who participate in bilingual education programs show an increase in their intellectual flexibility, higher achievement levels, and can communicate with more cultures.

In the Ohlone Mandarin Immersion program, students receive instruction in multi-age classrooms, which enhances language acquisition, as students are both teachers and learners at all times. Students receive instruction in core subjects (math, literacy, social studies, science) in both Mandarin and English according to the following model:

Grade	Mandarin	English
K/1	90%	10%
2/3	60%	40%
4/5	50%	50%

The Mandarin literacy curriculum uses **simplified characters** and Pinyin to include:

- Explicit language instruction to read and write Chinese characters
- Correct form and stroke order for writing in Chinese
- Content-based instruction
- Real-life opportunities to use Mandarin and explore Chinese culture

Educational Approach

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.

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 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 in and outside the classroom.

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.