

WELCOME LETTER

August 2023

Dear Parents, Students and Community Members,

Welcome to Ocotillo Elementary School, Home of the Bulldogs. We are extremely proud of our school and the programs we have designed to meet a wide variety of educational needs for children. We are committed to academic achievement and building fundamental skills in reading, math and language. We feel that a child's self-esteem, coupled with a safe, supportive environment, enhances the learning experience. Our goals of academic excellence and positive self-esteem can become a reality when staff and parents work together in an atmosphere of communication and cooperation. We invite you to become actively involved in your child's education and look forward to an exciting and productive 2023-2024 school year.

Sincerely,

Ms. Mandy Taylor, Principal

General School Information

School Address: 3225 W. Ocotillo, Phoenix, AZ 85017

School Web Site: ocotillo.wesdschools.org

Important Telephone Numbers:

Office: 602-347-2400

Health Office: 602-347-2410

Attendance: 602-347-2411

KidSpace: 602-347-2415

Head Start Preschool: 602-347-2443

School Goals

At Ocotillo Elementary, staff and teachers design instruction with the intent that all students meet benchmark expectations. However, intervention plans are in place to for students who excel or do not meet these goals.

Action Steps

- Maintain high student expectations
- Provide clear communication of academic and behavioral goals to ensure student success
- Hold students responsible for their actions
- Participate in continued professional development to enhance teacher effectiveness.
- Utilize research-based instructional practice
- Create and sustain a positive school environment that welcomes community and parental involvement
- Frequently monitor students using multiple assessments.
- Implement a variety of teaching strategies to meet the unique needs of students.

Instructional Practices

Ocotillo understands that effective, comprehensive assessment to screen, diagnose, monitor and measure outcomes is essential to evaluate the effectiveness of our programs. We will do this by implementing procedures to collaboratively and individually identify instructional improvements related to our identified needs in the areas of reading and math and behavior. Teachers will utilize assessment results to make data-based instructional decisions to provide interventions in the areas of reading, math, and social/emotional behavior.

School Hours

Office: 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Hours on Wednesdays 7:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Start/Dismissal Times

Grades K-6: 7:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Early Release Wednesdays K-6: 7:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Attendance/Truancy

In order to assure students are successful and meet current state legislation, ARS § 15-803, which requires all students to attend 90% of the school year, WESD has an Attendance Unit (AU). The AU will work in conjunction with the City Justice Courts to identify students who are chronically absent or are truant.

When a student reaches five unexcused/unverified absences, families will receive an attendance notification letter. When a student reaches 10 unverified, unexcused, and excused absences, families will receive an attendance warning letter and a referral to the AU for appropriate actions (see District guidelines). In order to avoid this eventuality, there are several precautions to take: (1) reinforce being on time and good attendance, (2) call the school each time a student will be late or absent, (3) present any medical documentation to the health technician and/or attendance clerk if illness will be a consistent, foreseeable issue.

An attendance letter will be sent by the school to the families of students who are approaching or pass the midway point for unexcused absences, excused absences and tardies. Parent cooperation is of the utmost importance in assuring student success.

Tardy/Late to School

Students who arrive after 7:30 a.m. will be required to be signed in by a parent/guardian in the front office each day the student is late to school. After three tardies, students will receive a consequence, including warnings, lunch detention or after-school detention. Students in after-school detention must be picked up by a parent/guardian at 3:15 p.m.

Reporting Absences

Parents are to report the reason for their child's absence on or before the day of the absence by calling our attendance clerk at 602-347-2411. All absences not verified on or before the absence occurs will remain unexcused.

Signing Out Students

Anyone signing students out during the school day must be listed on the student's emergency card and show valid identification every time – NO EXCEPTIONS! **Pictures of any form of identification will not be accepted.** We have found that calling students out of school early takes at least 15 minutes. Due to transitioning and dismissal procedures, students will not be called out of class 20 minutes prior to dismissal.

Parent/Guardian Contact Information

All parent/guardian/emergency contact information must be updated in person or through the ParentVUE app. Email changes will not be accepted.

Visitors

All visitors must sign-in at the front office. In order to visit any area on campus, a valid photo identification must be presented and left at the front office. IDs will be returned as visitors sign-out. Due to potential and ongoing health concerns, the principal may restrict access to visitors at any point in the school year to keep our students and staff safe by physically distancing and/or meeting health department requirements.

Field Trips

Parents and legal guardians are the only adults allowed to accompany students as chaperones on field trips. No grandparents or adults who do not have proper legal custody of the student will be permitted to

chaperone. Only one adult per child is able to go on the field trip and chaperones are not able to bring other children on the trip. Additional adults are not able to join the field trip at the location.

Breakfast Information

Our cafeteria serves nutritionally balanced meals each regular school day. Breakfast for all children is provided at no cost at the beginning of the day in the homeroom classroom. Breakfast ends in each classroom promptly at 7:35am. Not all breakfast selections are available for all students each day.

Student IDs

Student IDs are a mandatory part of the Ocotillo dress code. IDs must be worn by all students at all times for the sake of safety on the campus. The ID may not be defaced in any manner, including stickers and items added to the lanyard, and must be worn facing forward with a breakaway lanyard. Students who forget their ID will call home to arrange for parents to bring their ID or wear a temporary ID issued by the campus administration. Excessive ID violations may result in campus-level discipline. If a student is unable to locate his or her ID, a replacement **must** be purchased in the office for a nominal fee.

Dress Code

Student dress must be appropriate at all times. Any student dress or personal appearance that distracts from or interferes with the normal learning process is unacceptable.

Attire that is not acceptable includes:

- Half-shirts, shirts that reveal the chest, stomach or undergarments, tank tops, spaghetti-strap tops, or sheer (see-through) clothing
- Shirts with statements/images regarding alcoholic beverages, weapons, tobacco products, drugs, and/or unacceptable language/images
- Extremely short shorts, skirts or dresses, revealing ripped pants (no rips above the knee) or any clothing that is determined by an administrator to be revealing or inappropriate
- Footwear, such as flip-flops/slides, slippers, heels above 1", cleated athletic shoes, or shoes with wheels. (Tennis shoes are recommended for safety and are required on days the student has PE.)
- Hats, caps, bandannas, hoods, headbands/headgear, etc.
- Excessively baggy and/or sagging pants are not permitted. Undergarments must not show above pants.
- Pajamas (unless it's a designated spirit day)
- Excessive and/or dangerous jewelry
- Writing on self or others
- Distracting hair styles
- Exposed tattoos or "fake" tattoos are considered distracting and not permitted at school
- Please refer to the District guidelines on student dress outlined in the handbook under Student Conduct.

Students who violate the dress code standards may be asked to do any of the following after an attempt to contact the parent:

- Turn inappropriate clothing inside out
- Change into clothing that may be provided by the school
- Ask parent to bring other clothing brought to school

Repeated violations of the dress code standards may result in appropriate disciplinary action being taken, including suspension from school.

The decision as to whether or not a distracting condition exists and how it is handled shall be left to the reasonable discretion of the building administrators. In accordance with ARS § 15-843 and under severe disciplinary conditions, the principal has the authority to suspend a student from school following student due process procedures.

Special Services Requirements

Program services are provided for English Learners within each classroom. Special education programs are offered to students in all grade levels who are determined eligible under the federal and state guidelines.

Library Media Services

- Every school in the WESD has a well-equipped library media center that provides resources to support the curriculum at every grade level. The purpose of a school library is to support all students' education as lifelong learners and readers, encourage students to read for pleasure, teach students the skills necessary to locate and evaluate information, and encourage student responsibility.
- Kindergarten and first grade students may check out one item at a time. Students in second through sixth grade may check out two items at a time. Students may use the library during the day, as needed, with teacher permission.
- If a library book is lost or damaged beyond use, we appreciate receiving the replacement cost.
- Parents and families are encouraged to use the library media center as a community resource.

COMMUNICATION

Parent Communication

Conferencing is a positive way to develop two-way communications between home and school on how students are performing in academic and social development skills.

- Two formal parent-teacher conference times are scheduled during the year.

We encourage parents to hold conferences with the teacher whenever necessary. Please call the teacher for an appointment to set up additional conferences. "Drop-in" conferences are discouraged.

- Each month our school newsletter and calendar are sent home to provide information about school, community and special event activities.
- Midterms or report cards will be sent home in all grades approximately every nine weeks.
- Parents may request homework after a child has been out one complete day. Teachers need 24 hours to honor the request. A student has one day for each day absent to make up missed assignments.
- If you need to meet with a teacher, please make an appointment either before or after school. Parents will not be permitted to speak with the teachers during instructional time.
- The school marquee and school Facebook page are updated frequently to inform our community of current school events.
- It is extremely important that parents communicate with the school office in reference to withdrawals, emergency phone numbers/contact information and any change of address.

Student Records

- Student records for current students are maintained in the Ocotillo school office. Access to records is available to parents with educational rights. From time to time our records are audited, and you may be asked by our office staff to update information. It is essential that contact information, including address, phone numbers, and emergency contacts remain current at all times for the safety of your student.
- Records for former students are maintained at the District Office.

PTO

The PTO is a support service organization that functions to assist the school. Any parent or community member is eligible and encouraged to

join. The PTO plans and conducts fundraising projects for programs that enhance the curriculum. The PTO monthly meeting dates will be published in the school newsletters.

Site Council/District Councils

Our school Site Council is involved in school improvement planning, short-term problem solving, and staff selection. It is composed of administrators, certified personnel, classified personnel, parents/guardians and community members. If a parent is interested in becoming a member of Site Council, applications are available in the office. Elections are held in September of each year. We also have opportunities for teachers, classified staff, and parents to participate on committees at the District level.

School Newsletter

Our school newsletter contains a monthly calendar of events, dates to remember, student recognition, school improvement and other pertinent news regarding Ocotillo.

Student Telephone Usage

Students may not use the office phone without the permission of a teacher or the office staff. We discourage the use of the phone except for emergencies. Parents are urged to limit calls and messages to students. With the exception of emergencies, all calls during instructional time will be sent to voicemail.

Cell phones and other electronic devices (including tablets, iPads, iPods, handheld games, Apple watches, wearable communication devices, etc.) that are visible to the teacher during the school day are considered a distraction. During school hours, cell phones, Apple watches, and other wearable communication devices must be turned off and kept in the student's backpack. If cell phones are visible, or in use during school, they are subject to confiscation. First offense: confiscated by teacher and returned at end of the day. Second offense: confiscated by teacher and turned in to assistant principal's office; returned at the end of the day. Third offense: confiscated by teacher and returned to parents only during a conference.

SCHOOL PROGRAMS

After-school Activities

Ocotillo School sponsors several after-school activities such as Student Council, cross country, co-ed soccer, and boys and girls basketball programs. There is an activity fee for these programs, and complete information will be available as they are scheduled during the year.

After-school Academy

Ocotillo School offers a vibrant after-school program that offers additional academic support in math and reading, enrichment classes and demonstrations during the fall and spring semesters. This program is free of charge to participating Ocotillo students.

Child Care (KidSpace)

A District-sponsored childcare program is available that provides before-and after-school supervision and activities for students. There is a nominal fee for this service. Further information is available through the extended day office at 602-347-2415.

Head Start

Head Start is available at Ocotillo for four and five year olds. Information is available from the program director at 602-347-2415 or 602-347-2443.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Parking Lot

No student is to be on campus before 7:10 a.m. Our drop-off and pickup zone is along the curb in front of the school. Please do not leave your

vehicle unattended along the curbs in the driveway lane in front of the school. Vehicles parked along the curb will be subject to citation by the fire marshal or police. If you need to enter the building, or walk your child to the door, please park in the appropriate designated spaces in the parking lot. **Please respect and adhere to a five mph speed limit in the parking lot.** Everyone shall use the designated crosswalks where a crossing guard is provided. **Students are not to cross the street without the assistance of the crossing guard.** Please do not park on the east side of 31st Drive to pick up your child requiring him or her to cross the street unattended at dismissal. Please always pull forward as much as possible when dropping off your students in the morning or when picking up your student in the afternoon. If all drivers comply with this request, drop-offs and pickups will be smooth and wait times in the lane will be reduced.

Bicycles

Students may ride bicycles to school with permission from their parents; however, the Washington Elementary School District and Ocotillo School assume no responsibility for these bicycles. They must be parked in the bike racks correctly and locked. Bikes need to be walked on the sidewalk from the bus bay to the bike rack area. In other areas, students are expected to follow the basic traffic safety rules. Bicycles are not allowed on the campus after school hours. Should this happen, the bicycle may be taken away until a parent comes to claim it.

Safe Dismissal of Students

The safe dismissal of all students is important to the entire community. In order to ensure all students are returned safely to their parents, please follow these guidelines:

- Complete the Dismissal Instructions form by the first day of instruction. All students are required to have a current form on file with the teacher.
- Always communicate changes to your child's dismissal IN WRITING to the teacher and the office manager. We will not change your child's dismissal without YOUR WRITTEN permission.
- For your child's safety, **no dismissal changes will be made over the phone.**

Birthday Celebrations

Birthdays are an exciting time for an elementary school student. Please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Birthday snacks must be store-bought and must not violate the food nutrition guidelines that govern our lunch program.
- Birthday snacks should be delivered to the front office in the morning. Teacher discretion will be used as to when to distribute snacks, so as not to interfere with instruction.
- Classrooms are not the appropriate place for birthday parties.
- If invitations to an outside party are passed out at school, the entire class should be invited to avoid hurt feelings.
- Contact your child's teacher to coordinate any birthday snacks for the class.
- Balloons, balloon bouquets or large stuffed animals are NOT permitted in classrooms.

DISCIPLINE/BEHAVIOR

Ocotillo operates under these school-wide rules:

- I will be respectful.
- I will be responsible.
- I will be safe.
- I will be ready to learn.

In addition to the above school-wide rules, the following expectations have been established with safety and orderliness in mind.

- Come to school on time and prepared to learn.

- Do your personal best.
- Follow both written and oral directions of all teachers and staff.
- Keep hands, feet and objects to self. Aggressive behavior will not be tolerated.

This includes, but is not limited to, hitting, pushing, pinching, shoving, kicking, slapping, fighting, play fighting, kickboxing, threatening, encouraging others to fight, spitting, rock throwing, etc.

- Speak with appropriate language at all times.
- No gum, candies or objects in mouth.
- Treat others with kindness and respect.

The discipline program at Ocotillo School is based on mutual respect and high expectations. The philosophy of our program is that we expect all students to behave appropriately in the classroom, cafeteria, playground and on the bus. We will not allow any student to prevent the teacher from teaching or to prevent other students from learning.

In order to create a positive learning climate, all students will know what the school and classroom rules are, what the consequences of inappropriate behavior will be, and that there will be positive recognition of those students who follow the school rules.

The emphasis of our discipline program is to help children develop effective decision-making skills and understand the consequences of their actions. Consistency and fairness will lead to a better understanding of the importance of self-control and appropriate behavior. Home-school communication and cooperation are vital to providing a positive learning environment.

Discipline Procedures

We believe that each child should be responsible for his or her own behaviors. The staff at Ocotillo also believe that positive incentives will promote positive behaviors. Each classroom teacher will offer positive incentives/choices as a first step to preventing discipline problems. However, the intent of having school discipline consequences is to improve student behavior. If a child becomes a disruption in the classroom, the teacher will adhere to progressive discipline. This includes but is not limited to:

- a verbal warning to the student,
- think time within the classroom, and/or think time in another classroom and contact home.

At each step, the student will have the opportunity to correct his or her behavior and return to participate with the class. If the above steps have been followed and the behavior continues to disrupt the learning of others, the teacher will refer the student to the Front Office/Student Services.

Severe behavior will automatically result in a referral to the Front Office/Behavior Support Advocate. (see *Definition of Offenses and Disciplinary Action Chart in the Appendix*) Upon receiving a referral, the student will meet with the Behavior Support Advocate and/or administration to discuss the inappropriate behavior. Developing an improvement plan may be necessary. Parents/guardians will be notified. Continued disregard of school rules or referrals of a serious nature will require a conference with the parents. During the parent conference, the child's behavior will be discussed, and the administrator(s), teacher, student, and the parent will work together to establish a plan of action. The student is the main person responsible for the plan. Continued disregard of school rules will lead to more severe consequences that may include suspension or expulsion.

Playground/Cafeteria Behavior

Lunch visitors will be allowed at the discretion of the school administration following all health and safety protocols for our students. However, parents may not accompany their child to the playground for recess at any time. Students are expected to follow all school rules (Be Respectful, Responsible and Safe) while in the cafeteria and on the

playground. Students breaking a rule will receive a "lunch ticket" from the adult on duty. These are warnings. After three "lunch tickets" are issued, a letter is sent to the student's parent, and the student may be required to serve detention during lunch/recess.

Playground Expectations

- Play in the approved, safe areas of the playground.
- Games involving tagging, hitting or tackling are not permitted.
- Remain on playground with an Ocotillo employee at all times.
- Report injuries immediately.
- Food, candy or gum is NOT permitted on the playground (this includes food from home or from the cafeteria).
- Students are not permitted to share food brought from home (this includes chips, snacks, candy, etc.).
- Flipping bottles and cartons of any kind will result in student discipline.
- Respect the landscaping (trees, plants, etc.).
- Sports balls must be provided and appropriately used. Balls brought from home are not allowed. If safety is compromised, they may be confiscated by monitors. (This includes basketballs and soccer balls, etc.) Wall-balls and footballs are not permitted.
- Sand, rocks, wood chips, pinecones, etc. are not to be thrown.
- Use equipment in a safe manner. (Ex: feet-first on the slide, do not hang upside down, etc.).

Bulldog Barkers/Gold Coins

Any time a student performs an act of kindness, shows responsibility, or displays pride in our school, he or she can earn a Bulldog Barker coupon. On Fridays, students are recognized through the use of these Bulldog Barker coupons. Gold coins can be awarded to homeroom classes during their special areas and lunch/recess time by exhibiting respectful, responsible and safe behaviors. When a class earns 40 gold coins, they are awarded a Gold Coin Recess!

Bullying Prevention Program

Stop, Walk, and Talk is directly aligned to our PBIS philosophy that focuses on changing social norms regarding conflict-resolution and the prevention of bullying behaviors. This bullying prevention model uses the entire school, staff and students, to prevent bullying and intimidation. Students and teachers participate in regular classroom meetings to educate students on the different forms bullying can take, to understand what they can do when they see bullying occur, and to share their own thoughts and feelings about the school environment in relation to bullying issues. If you feel your child is the victim of bullying, please discuss it with his or her teacher or the administration.

Stop, Walk and Talk Procedures

1. Ask the person to STOP. Tell the person that you do not like the problem behavior and to please stop.
2. If the behavior does not stop, WALK away. Walk away from the person to avoid further conflict.
3. If the problem behaviors continue, TALK to an adult.

Articles Prohibited at School

The following items may not be brought to school:

- Alcohol, drugs or tobacco products including "e-cigarettes"
- Items such as toy guns, chains, matches, lighters, fireworks, explosives, caps, "shocker" pens, laser pointers, items that resemble or promote alcohol, drug or tobacco products, fidget spinners, slime, etc.
- Animals
- Electronic devices such as musical CDs, tapes, iPods, iPads, tablets, Gameboys, Nintendos, etc.
- Skateboards, rollerblades, cleated shoes and/or roller sneakers
- Gum, candy, energy drinks, sodas, or bags of chips larger than 2 oz.

- Weapons of any kind, including but not limited to: firearms, knives, brass knuckles, mace, pepper spray. (This is a serious violation of school rules and can result in a long-term suspension.)
- Toys, hats, bandannas or footballs. (Basketballs, soccer balls, and kickballs are permitted, but Ocotillo will not be held responsible if they are lost or stolen)

Arizona Revised Statute (A.R.S. 15-507)

A person who knowingly abuses a teacher or other school employee on school grounds or while the teacher or employee is engaged in the performance of his or her duty is guilty of a Class 3 Misdemeanor and the school will ask the adult to leave and/or contact proper authorities.