

# WELCOME LETTER

August 2025

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 2025-2026 school year.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Mandy George, Principal

## General School Information

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

**School Web Site:** [ocotillo.wesdschools.org](http://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/Tuancy

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 total absences (excused, unexcused and/or unverified), 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. Each day, class begins their morning meeting at 7:30 a.m., so it is important for students to be in the classroom on time.

### 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

Parents, families, and community members are encouraged to visit the school and take an active role in the education of all students. Visitors under 18 must be accompanied by an adult during the visit. 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. Lunch and recess visitors will not be allowed to encourage socialization with peers during meal time and recess. Administration may restrict access to visitors at any point in the school year to keep our students and staff safe and ensure the learning environment is uninterrupted.

Procedures regarding volunteers may be found in the WESD Volunteer Handbook. All volunteers must complete district required forms annually. All volunteers must sign in and out at the front office to obtain a visitor's badge.

## 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 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 7:30 a.m. Not all breakfast selections are available for all students each day. Choice of items comes on a first-come, first-served basis.

## 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

Please see the District portion of the handbook for Dress Code information.

## 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.

Our school uses a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to make sure all students have what they need to learn and grow. MTSS helps us support students in their academics as well as their social-emotional well-being. All students receive strong, school-wide support, but some may benefit from more targeted help. This might include additional instruction, small group time to practice skills, or more individualized plans. Teachers and staff regularly check how students are doing and adjust supports as needed. Our goal is to work as a team with families to help all students do their best by using data to provide the right kind of support for both academic success and social-emotional growth.

## 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 not permitted.

- Each month our school newsletter and calendar are sent home to provide information about school, community and special event activities.
- Progress reports 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 between 7:10 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. unless they have an appointment.
- The school marquee, school Facebook and Instagram 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 will be confiscated..

Parent/Guardian will be required to pick up the phone from the office every time it is confiscated.

## 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 Program

Ocotillo School offers a few after school classes funded by tax credit donations that provide additional academic support in math and reading for specific grade levels. 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 31<sup>st</sup> Drive to pick up your child requiring him or her to cross the street unattended at dismissal. Please cross streets at crosswalks only. 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 and completion of reflection within the classroom, and/or think time and completion of reflection 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

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. Students who continuously break playground rules will receive lunch detention.

## Cafeteria & 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).
- Only snack-sized bags of chips are allowed during lunch. Unfinished bags of chips will be thrown away as students are leaving the cafeteria unless the student has a lunchbox to put them in.
- 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.).
- Students must complete a sportsmanship class prior to being given the opportunity to use sports balls during lunch recess. Balls brought

from home are not allowed. If rules are repeatedly broken, students will have to retake the sportsmanship class prior to being able to play sports during recess. If safety is compromised, the balls 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.).

## House System & Incentives

During the 25-26 school year, Ocotillo will adopt a House System to accompany our schoolwide incentive. All students will be placed in a house (team) for the duration of their time at Ocotillo. This will encourage positive relationships between grades and foster a sense of community on campus. We are eight houses that equal one school family.

Any time a student performs an act of kindness, shows responsibility, or displays pride in our school, he or she can earn a house point. On Mondays, students are recognized through the use of these House Points. Gold coins will 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 two ounces.
- 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 costumes (unless for an identified school sponsored spirit day). game balls of any kind (soccer, basketball, kickball, football).

## 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.