

Q & A – OES Initiatives

1) What are the OES “Houses” my child mentions?

OES divides all classrooms into one of six color “houses”, which are cross-grade groups of kids who do projects and activities together each year. For instance, the Red House consists of one PreK class, one Kindergarten class, one Grade 1 class, and one Grade 2 class. The house groups also take turns planning and hosting the monthly All School Morning Meetings.

2) What are All School Morning Meetings?

OES All School Morning Meetings bring all OES students and staff together for a Morning Meeting. We choose a theme, and the greeting, activity, sharing and message all tie in with that monthly theme. Students from the host color house model and lead the activities.

3) What’s the Looping Program?

Looping is a classroom placement option in which students and their classroom teacher work together for two years. Typically, Kindergarten parents each February are asked if they wish to have their child “loop”, and if selected their child is placed with the same children and teacher for both 1st and 2nd grades.

4) How do I get involved as a volunteer?

We have a number of opportunities for volunteering in your own child’s classroom, tutoring in general reading or math as part of our Morning Mentor program, and we are always looking for volunteer adult crossing guards, who assist with traffic and student crosswalks in the morning. Visit with your child’s teacher or the OES office to find out more.

5) What “specials” does my child have, and what does a “6-day schedule” mean?

OES students work with highly qualified specialist staff in a number of content areas, and their “specials” are all blocked in a certain portion of their day. For instance, Kindergarten children may have all of their specials following lunch each day. Specials for OES children include physical education, music, art, computers, library media skills, and Spanish. Rather than operating on a 5-day/Monday-Friday schedule, we work on a rotating day schedule, days 1-6. Regardless of days off or snow days, all students receive the same amount of instruction in each of these core areas.

6) How do I report my child’s absence for the day?

We ask parents to communicate with the OES office by 9 a.m. if their child will be absent, and there are multiple ways to do this: voicemail is always on if you prefer to leave a message; email is also an option. If students are reported absent by their teacher, we attempt to contact families to learn the reason for the absence. We appreciate the prior notice, since it can be hard to track parents down during the work day.

- 7) What academic support is available for children who are behind or ahead of grade level?

The first line of support is always your child's classroom teacher, and our highly-trained staff are adept at modifying lessons and providing specific small group support right in the classroom. If greater needs are identified than can be met in the classroom, OES has a full-time Title I reading teacher available to serve K-2 children. Depending on the level of federal funding available, we are sometimes able to expand services to include math. In some cases, students will show strong ability in math or reading and we are able to provide additional tutoring through a number of resource staff.

- 8) How do I know if my child should go to summer school?

Our summer school program is not what most of us experienced, and nearly all of our students attend. Ours provides a strong focus on enriching and interesting topics that we are unable to incorporate during the school year, while providing on-going practice with learned skills so we reduce learning loss. Students who have finished first grade are eligible to take swimming as part of their summer school morning as well in our beautiful Aquatic Center.

- 9) What parent organizations are available?

Osceola recently re-joined the PTA, and membership information and organizational events are spotlighted in our building newsletter each month. In addition, a number of community organizations exist to provide activities for students, including baseball and softball, soccer, theatre and many more. Check with any school office for a Youth Activities Booklet to connect with your local organizations.

- 10) What sports are available for elementary students?

There are no school-affiliated sports for students younger than 7th grade. Check with any school office for a Youth Activities Booklet to learn what is offered through our many local organizations.

- 11) What's the best way to communicate with school staff?

Our staff is able to be reached by email or voicemail, or through a note sent with your child in their school folder. Response times will vary depending on each staff member's daily schedule, and what events are happening in the building on a given day. Our staff

work hard with your children during the day, so have limited time to handle additional communication until after school. We encourage parents to establish a system with their child's teacher early in the year, and work together to come up with a plan that will work for everyone.

12) How do I know my child's lunch balance?

The easiest way for you to keep tabs on their balance is by establishing an on-line school account called "Family Access". Applications are available in each school office, and with the log on and password you'll receive, you can check on lunch balances, update contact information, and receive notices through a Message Center feature. If you have limited internet access, our office staff can check balances if you stop in or call us.

13) Is there Early Entry to Kindergarten?

We do have a policy and process for early entry to Kindergarten. Families interested in finding out more are encouraged to contact the elementary office by March 1st of the spring before, in order to be included in the multiple events that are part of the evaluation process. The process is highly selective, since young children change rapidly in those early years, and even though they may have a September birthday and only miss the cut-off by a few days, the average child in their grade will still be about 9 months older than them. When you are 4 or 5 years old, nine months is a lot of developmental time.

14) When do we find out our child's teacher for the next year? Is there a way to request a teacher or separate my child from others?

We accept specific teacher requests or student separation requests during February for grades 1 and 2, since our placement process unfolds over the spring and is basically done in early May. Requests for Kindergarten are collected during March Round Up and into early June. PreK requests for location and time of day are collected in February at Child Development Days, and thereafter are on a space-available basis. Placements for the following fall's 1st and 2nd grade go home in report cards in early June. Kindergarten letters typically go out in mid/late July, and PreK placements in early August. Requests for classroom changes are compiled over the summer if additional issues arise for families, with all modifications happening in late August. Call us, and we will always visit and work through concerns with our parents.

15) How is bullying handled at OES?

We believe in a proactive approach in addressing bullying, and have several pieces in place to educate and train our students in how to handle situations, model and practice how to respond, and how to get adults involved if needed. We also recognize that most young children engage in some type of bully behavior, but they may not truly be bullies who repeatedly target the same child or children over time. Our goal is to strengthen the entire OES community to address bully behavior when it happens, and to engage students who are making these choices in the process so they learn new ways of dealing with

issues. More information is sent home with our students on our approaches each school year.

16) What fundraisers does OES get involved in?

Given the age of our students we do very little with fundraisers. During February we collect “Pennies for Patients”, which goes to fund a cure for Leukemia. We collect milk jug lids, Campbell Soup Labels and BoxTops, and from time to time will collect warm winter hats and mittens, food for the food shelf, or items for other good causes. None of these are required activities – we are simply providing information on the request and asking families to participate if they wish to. We do receive Target dollars from their “Take Charge of Education” program, and use those funds to purchase extras for our students.

17) When is Kindergarten Round Up?

Our Round-Up registration event is usually in mid-March. Families are encouraged to check with us in the winter months to make sure they are on our mailing list, and then all age-eligible families receive an invitation to the event.

18) What are Child Development Days?

Our Child Development Days event is a family event usually held in early February. We provide health, learning and behavioral screening for all children ages 2 ½ through 3 ½, and we have a play-based observation session for those who are 4 and ready for PreK in the fall. We offer a Family Resource Fair, snacks and prizes, an Open House and registration process for PreK for fall, and a warm welcome to our Osceola Schools.

19) How do I get registered for PreK? Is there a choice on location or time of day?

Pre-registration happens at our Child Development Days event in early February. Parents who have a child who will be 4 on/before the following September 1st are encouraged to contact the elementary office during late fall to make sure you are on our mailing list. Registration materials are sent in January, and we invite everyone to stop in during Child Development Days to complete the process, meet our staff, and see our classrooms. During pre-registration parents have the opportunity to express a preference on location and time for PreK for their child for the coming fall. Registration for PreK remains open all spring and summer, and throughout the next school year, but early registrations allow us to plan for staffing and to honor as many parent preferences as possible.

20) What are the requirements for parents in the PreK charter school?

Osceola Charter Preschool was created on the philosophy that parents are the first and most important educators of their children. We know that by engaging closely with parents during the important PreK school experience we can grow stronger families, promote higher academic achievement in our children, and strengthen and build connections within the Osceola community. We ask that all families commit to

approximately 6 class sessions during the PreK year, serving as classroom volunteer and special guest of their child, and participate in at least 3 parent education workshops or activities during the year. Volunteers include not only moms and dads, but grandmas and grandpas, aunts and uncles, daycare providers, even grown up siblings. Having people actively engaged in class time who are important to your child sends a powerful message about the value of learning and education.