

Happy New Year/Valentine's Day/Presidents' Day ...

As you can imagine, over the past few months we've had many, many incoming kindergarten parents come to visit Chabot. During these visits, I've found myself answering many questions -- from academic to social to school climate. It occurred to me that it would be helpful to share our educational philosophy with our current families, as well as with potential ones.

At Chabot, we strive to provide a rich and varied curriculum designed to give every student the best chance to succeed. We feel strongly that learning happens everywhere - not just through math and language arts in the classroom, but also through music, writing and leadership on the playground.

It's hard to make a single diagram that represents everything that's going on at Chabot, especially since new priorities and programs pop up all the time, but hopefully the one provided here will help. Our goal is to develop the whole child. For example, a year ago the SSC led efforts to support community on the school ground by creating more inclusive activity on the playground, and we brought in Coach Jason. Our recesses are running more smoothly and more kids are engaged and actually playing together. This is particularly important this year with the minimal space we have due to construction.

#### ***STRENGTHENING OUR CLIMATE***

In the past few weeks, we've been focusing more on creating and strengthening the school climate at Chabot. Dave Nettell has been working with students and teachers to develop new ideas and strategies around this. Our goal is to create a culture that supports all children and puts issues back into the students' hands. We want them to be empowered to see that they are the key to solving problems and helping to improve their own day, issues with friends, classroom or school climate. Some of Mr. Nettell's key concepts revolve around sayings such as *Fix or Blame; Solve or Complain; Mistakes = Information and Working Together*. Ask your son or daughter to share some of what they did with Mr. Nettell!

When children are making poor choices that affects the safety of others. We support children to solve their own problems and learn from their mistakes. Coach Jason, Ms. Cannon, Mr. Harris and I all work with students to make better choices and to talk issues through. When a student does get in trouble at Chabot, we look for consequences like picking up garbage, helping in another classroom, etc. that are community service related and allow the student to make amends by having made a positive impact on our school.

#### ***ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT***

Many parents ask me about Chabot's teaching philosophy. There's so much talk these days about testing; people want to know whether Chabot designs our curriculum to ace the tests, or do we focus instead on additional areas of learning. And how much freedom does OUSD give us to customize the curriculum to our unique environment?

Chabot's philosophy is to increase academic achievement for all students, regardless of current achievement, socioeconomic status, etc. We have an academic plan that's bigger than this space allows me to communicate. But in short, to achieve this goal, we focus efforts on the following areas:

- **Consistency & Excellence** in instruction, ensuring the entire Chabot faculty delivers high quality instruction. This year we introduced professional learning communities (PLC) where each grade-level team meets weekly to coordinate curriculum and address classroom challenges.
- **Closing the Achievement Gap** with acceleration programs to ensure struggling students have the opportunity to achieve. This is a critical element of what makes Chabot successful. Over the last few years, we've implemented a number of programs, including *FastForward* and Saturday School. In addition, we support individual students through SST interventions (Student Success Team) and individual intervention and acceleration with Ms. Bermeo.

- **High Engagement** strategies such as Calendar Math, Being a Writer, Kagan Cooperative Learning structures, and the Science Fair which make learning fun and social.
- **Differentiation:** We realize that all children have an individual pace that works best for them. We provide teachers a variety of tools to keep our students engaged in learning at Chabot:
  - **Math** differentiation for advanced and struggling students takes many forms, including peer tutoring; Math Stars; Marcy Cook math tiles for challenge materials; math challenge work books; times table challenges; math games; calendar math and partner games. Your child's teacher can talk to you more about the approach taken in the individual classroom.
  - **Literacy** is differentiated differently by grade level. Teachers may vary the type of assignment, writing projects, extension activities, class novels and so on so that all students have a program that keeps them engaged in learning and provides the right amount of challenges.

**FOCUS ON THE WHOLE CHILD**

People also want to know how the various programs outside of the classroom fit together. What's all the great stuff I hear about Junior Coaches? Why the new focus on PE? What about the garden? Chabot is about much more than classroom learning - these programs - many thanks to PTA funding and parent volunteerism - help to round out our focus on the whole child

- **Leadership and Growth** opportunities such as Junior Coaches, Student Council, School Safety Patrol and the *Good Cents* Student Roundtable.
- **School Climate** improvements in playground/recess, guiding the school through the disruption of construction, using the writing program to create opportunities to teach life skills.
- **Healthy Bodies** with Physical Education led by Coach Fike, Mr. Wong, Mr. Mayer and Coach Jason.
- **Enrichment** through our wonderful PTA-funded programs in music, art, garden, Spanish, computers and more. All students have weekly art and music classes.

It's hard to fit all of this into a single diagram, but I hope the one below helps. Your children are learning and growing every day, and our goal at Chabot is to support this in a positive, healthy, inclusive and engaging environment.

It is deeply gratifying to watch your children grow and change as they learn. Please feel free to call me if you ever have any questions.

