

ORTEGA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

HANDBOOK



A community full of lifelong learners!

Rachel Romo, Principal

2023-2024

ORTEGA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

1283 Terra Nova Blvd.

Pacifica, CA 94044

650.738.6670 - Telephone 650.738.6672 - FAX

At Ortega Elementary School, our mission is to support staff and families in providing a safe and nurturing environment in which each student can be successful academically, socially, and emotionally, according to his or her potential.

Pacifica School District Mission Statement

“The Pacifica School District, the community it serves, and the children they cherish, together prepare each child to meet the challenges of the future by providing an equitable, rigorous academic program which nurtures curiosity and inspires joy, confidence, and achievement in learning.”

PACIFICA SCHOOL DISTRICT
375 REINA DEL MAR AVENUE
PACIFICA, CA 94044
650.738.6600
www.PacificaSD.org

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the 2023-2024 school year! This is my first year at Ortega and I am looking forward to sharing an exciting year of learning, exploration and growth with your students.

At Ortega we believe in developing and maintaining a strong partnership between school and community. This partnership is what drives instruction for our students and helps to maintain the standard of education our students deserve. As a school, we want you to know that we are here to support you in any and every way we possibly can. At Ortega, we are dedicated to fostering a communication-based environment that is supportive and nurturing for our students, families, and staff. We believe in equitable outcomes for all students, and strive to help them become independent, confident learners with the skills necessary to meet the challenges in their future. To address the needs of our students, Ortega offers a well-rounded, differentiated curriculum that supports the academic, social, and emotional development of all students..

I can't wait to see each and every Ortega family back here at school! Our Otters will experience the traditions and culture of Ortega and prepare themselves for the future during this exciting school year. I look forward to a productive and incredible school year for all our Otters!

Sincerely,

Rachel Carion Romo
Principal

ORTEGA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
BELL SCHEDULE

Regular Schedule

Wednesdays & Minimum Days

TK/KINDERGARTEN

8:30 – 12:30

8:30 – 12:30

(Kinder Beginning of Dec. starts Rotating, once a week 12:30-- 1:30)

RECESS: 10:20 – 10:40

GRADE 1

8:30 – 2:35

8:30 – 1:35

RECESS: 10:20 – 10:40

LUNCH TIME: 11:45 – 12:25

GRADE 2

8:30 – 2:35

8:30 – 1:35

RECESS: 10:00- 10:20

LUNCH TIME: 11:45 - 12:25

GRADE 3

8:30 – 2:35

8:30 – 1:35

RECESS: 10:00- 10:20

LUNCH TIME: 12:25 – 1:05

GRADE 4 and 5

8:30 – 2:55

8:30 – 1:35

RECESS: 10:40 - 11:00

LUNCH TIME: 12:25 – 1:05

Ortega Elementary School Staff

Faculty:

TK: Sharon Rios

Kinder: Robin Foster
Michelle Arenas
Chelsea McDow

First: Meredith Shannon
Lisa DeVry
Gloria Fare

Second: Katherine Prescenzi
Queenie Ngan
Debbie Coberly (2/3)

Third: Debbie Coberly (2/3)
Noreen Abulencia
Sibyl Felts

Fourth: Gina Arguello
Nikki Sims
Debbie Andre

Fifth: Karen Stevenson
Chris Voisard
Diane Siegel

Response to Intervention Teacher:

Special Education:

Resource Specialist Program Teacher:

Speech:

Psychologist:

Counselor:

TK - 2 Music Teacher:

3 - 5 Music Teacher:

Art Teacher:

Garden Lead:

Karen Stevenson

Christina Bailey, Stephanie Symons

Nick Glow

Mary Carniglia

Jaclyn Morrison

Conner Sines

Michael Reeves

Mark Unbehagen

Lily Hart

Cami Stearns

SUPPORT STAFF:

Librarian: Julia Hall

Clerical: Tiffany Hanna, Jenny Gadwah, Victoria Broadway

Instructional: Cindy Szentkuti, Gail Barrett, Mimi Agunbiade, Marina Larrarte, Mary Pilster, Rose McElearney, Clara Bellinger, Ellen Crane, Silvia Rocha, Nicole Sims

Custodial: Leyda Lopez, Eric Jones

Nutritional: Julie Gallagher, Rosaline Romero

LVN: Nicole Ruvalcaba

GENERAL INFORMATION

Absences/Independent Study

If your child is absent from school, please telephone the school office (738-6670) before 10:00 a.m. The school has an answering machine if you wish to leave a message before or after school hours. **Schools no longer receive funding for excused absences. Funding will be based on the actual days of attendance. It is vital that students be in school except when truly ill – every absence costs your child’s school instructional dollars.**

ATTENDANCE: Students that miss 10% of the school year are more likely to fall behind academically and more likely to drop out of high school.

TARDINESS Students are expected to arrive at school on time. If a student is late to school, he/she must report to the office for a pass. If the child is going to be 30 minutes late or more, please call the school office. Habitual tardiness disrupts the classroom instruction and significantly impacts your child’s education. Excessive tardiness may result in a SARB (Student Attendance Review Board) meeting.

If you must plan a trip or go out of town, please remember that the school cannot receive credit for your child’s attendance unless the absence meets the criteria for **INDEPENDENT STUDY**: short term (absence of 5 - 10 days). It is important that your child be placed on Independent Study, if eligible. **Independent study must be requested and approved two weeks before the first day of your child’s absence.** It is a simple process and will help keep your child up with his class work. The District will also receive full attendance credit. Your child’s teacher or the office would be happy to help you place your child on Independent Study. The Independent Study contract must be signed before the student is out of school.

If the assigned school work is incomplete or not turned in when the student returns, the absences will not qualify for Independent Study and will be marked as unexcused.

Bicycles

Students who ride a bicycle or scooter to school must wear a helmet. A bike rack is available to park and lock one’s bicycle. Riding bicycles and scooters on campus from 8am-3pm is prohibited. Skateboards are not allowed at school.

Cafeteria

All students have access to free breakfast and lunch this school year. The District’s Food Service Meal Policy and monthly menu is available online at www.pacificasd.org. Breakfast starts at 8:10. Students eat their breakfast on the yard or at the picnic tables outside of the library.

Wellness Policy

All foods available on each campus during the school day support the district adopted federal nutritional guidelines and objectives of promoting student health and reducing childhood obesity in accordance with Board Policy 5030 and the District Student Wellness Plan.

The Board believes that foods and beverages available to students at district schools should support the District health curriculum and promote optimal health, taking into consideration the needs of students with special

dietary needs.

School staff shall encourage parents/guardians or other volunteers to support the district's nutrition education program by considering nutritional quality when selecting any snacks which they may donate for occasional class parties. A maximum of four class parties or celebrations per year shall be held after the lunch period whenever possible, as a way to promote student health and maximize the use of instructional time.

In support of this policy, staff, students and parents are strongly encouraged to refrain from bringing snacks to share for birthdays or other celebrations unless it is for one of the four school sanctioned celebration days. (Full text of District Wellness Policy may be found on the District Website)

Class Parties/Special Activities

Class parties/special activities are held at the discretion of the teacher.

Cellphones, Smart Watches, etc.

Students who have cellphones and Apple or Smart Watches **should turn these devices off and/or silence them and store them in their backpack during school hours.** Students will not be allowed to use cellphones during the school day. If a student needs to contact their family they can use the phone in the office. If adults need to contact their student they should call the office. Parents and students should make prior arrangements for rainy days, after-school activities, etc.

Conferences

Parents are always welcome to come to school and discuss class work. If you would like a conference with a teacher, please call or email the teacher for an appointment. When visiting school, all adults must first sign in at the school office and the secretary will notify the teacher that the parent has arrived. In our school calendar we have scheduled parent-teacher conferences twice a year to discuss student progress. This year our conferences will be held during the weeks of November 13 - 17, 2023 and March 11 - 15, 2024.

Disaster Preparedness and Drills

A fire and/or disaster drill is held monthly. These drills follow the Big Five Safety Protocol (see below) and are carried out for the safety of the students in case of emergency. Staff has been trained in emergency procedures and an extensive school disaster plan has been designed and implemented. Each classroom has an emergency kit purchased by the district.

Action Response Definitions and Protocols

Ortega School follows the **Big Five Safety Protocol**

Shelter in Place: For environmental hazards: Go inside immediately. Close doors, windows, and vents.

Drop, Cover and Hold On: For earthquakes and explosions: Protect from falling debris. Drop to the floor. Take cover and hold on.

Secure Campus: For potential threats of violence nearby: Go inside the nearest building. Close and lock all doors. Remain inside until the threat has passed.

Lockdown/Barricade: For immediate threats of violence on premises: Go inside. Lock and barricade all doors. Cover windows and turn off lights. Remain quiet and alert

Evacuation: When conditions outside are safer than inside: Exit the building, and move to a safe location.

Positive Behavior Intervention & Support (PBIS)

PBIS is a proactive approach to building a sense of community at our school. Together the staff created behavior expectations for all students, and can be seen posted throughout the school. Our goal is to support students making good choices.

- **PAWS** – Students are expected to
 - model **P**ositive behavior
 - **A**ct responsibly
 - **W**ork respectfully
 - act **S**afely.

Pacifica School District’s student behavior and discipline guidelines

Students who become involved in areas of problem behavior will be subject to certain disciplinary actions. Depending upon the problem behavior of the student, one or more of the following actions may be taken, not necessarily in the order listed.

Interpretation of the guidelines by school administrators will take into account frequency, severity, and the age at which problems occur. School administrators may involve the intervention of other community resources. Any action will be in accordance with Administrative policy, Board policy, and State law.

Problem Areas

The following is a list of problem areas and possible interventions and disciplinary actions that may be utilized:

Tardiness	Destruction of Property	Verbal Abuse	Drugs
Unexcused Absence	Fighting	Forgery	Any Weapon Including any Knife
Defiance of Authority	Alcohol	Theft	Extortion/Robbery
Disorderly Conduct	Physical Assault/Battery	Possession of Tobacco or Products	Terroristic Threats
Dress Code - if inappropriate to instructional setting	Arson	Sexual Harassment	Explosive Devices, Firecrackers

DEFINITIONS OF POSSIBLE INTERVENTIONS and DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

Informal Conference: A school official (teacher, administrator) may talk to the student and try to reach an agreement regarding how the student should behave. Conference A formal conference held between the student and one or more school officials. A record will be kept of the conference.

SARB: A School Attendance Review Board (SARB) established to help students and their parents with school attendance or behavior problems.

In-School Suspension: A student is assigned to an in-school suspension program by the principal or designee for offenses when suspension is permitted.

Suspension: Suspension is a disciplinary action, which excludes a pupil from regular classroom instruction for adjustment purposes for a period of time not to exceed five (5) consecutive school days, ten (10) consecutive school days for Special Education students.

Community Resources: Police, Youth Service Bureau, Pyramid Alternatives, Children's Protective Services, Community Mental Health, Clergy, Department of Health Services, etc.

Uniform Complaint Procedures and Sexual Harassment Notification

Ortega School follows district guidelines for Sexual Harassment BP 5145.7 and AR 1312.3 Uniform Complaint Procedures. For more complete information on Education Code requirements related to student behavior as well as Uniform Complaint Procedures please refer to the District Handbook/Annual Parent Notification available online and at the District Office.

DRESS CODE

Students shall dress appropriately for school. Clothing and footwear should allow students to safely participate in a variety of school activities.

The following guidelines shall apply to all regular school activities:

1. Clothing, jewelry, and personal items shall be free of writing, pictures, or any other insignia which is vulgar, lewd, obscene, profane, or sexually suggestive or which promotes the use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, or other illegal activity.
2. Appropriate shoes that are considered safe for the given school activity must be worn at all times.
3. Hats, caps, and hoods may be worn indoors. Student's eyes and ears must be visible and unobstructed.

The dress code shall be modified as appropriate to accommodate a student's religious or cultural observance, health condition, or other circumstance deemed necessary by the principal or designee. In addition, the principal or designee may impose dress requirements to accommodate the needs of special school activities, physical education classes, athletic activities, and other extracurricular and cocurricular activities. We appreciate your assistance in helping children come to school dressed safely and appropriately for all school activities.

Emergency Forms

Every student must have an emergency form on file in the office. These forms should be updated every school year. Families will be given an emergency form at the beginning of the school year. Each family should fill it out and return it to the homeroom teacher or office. If, throughout the school year the address or telephone number is changed, please see that any changes are sent to the school office. In case of an emergency, it is very important that the office have on file current telephone numbers for the home, parents' work and a friend or neighbor who would be willing to care for students whose parents cannot be reached. **Students cannot be released to anyone whose name is not on their emergency form.** Please be sure that several local emergency contacts are listed in the appropriate section.

Immunizations

For the most recent changes to immunization requirements, please visit the district website: www.pacificasd.org/District/1586-New-immunization-Requirements.html

LEAVING SCHOOL GROUNDS: We have a “closed campus” which means students may not leave school during school hours without a parent signing the student out at the school office. Please remember to bring a photo ID when signing your child out.

Library

The librarian is run and organized by Julia Hall. Each class is invited to go to the library weekly. Teachers and the school librarian explain the procedures and expectations for students in the Ortega Library.

Lost and Found

Personal articles or clothing found on the school grounds or in the building are kept in the hallway next to the office. Items not claimed by the end of each semester are boxed and given to a non-denominational, non-profit welfare agency. Please label all materials and clothing your student brings to school.

Medical

School personnel cannot diagnose or treat illnesses or previous injuries. First aid can be administered at school. When a sick or injured student is brought to the office, the school secretary or a school assistant will administer first aid and notify parents for more serious problems. If a child is too ill to be in class, the child is too ill to remain in school.

Medication at School

If it is necessary to take medication during school hours, parents must provide medications, and a written notification of this must be on file in the office. District policy does not allow medications to be kept with the student. Provisions for storage of medication must be made with the school secretary. Medications must be accompanied by a doctor’s note and should be in the original container. Prescriptions must have the student’s name and the appropriate dosage on the label of the original container.

Office

Office hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Messages for students will be delivered only at lunchtime or at the end of the school day, unless there is an emergency. Please limit messages for students to urgent or most necessary situations. Children are allowed to use the telephone for urgent calls, not to make changes for social purposes.

Parental Rights Notification

At the beginning of each school year, the District provides a copy of your parental rights. You are asked to read the brochure and acknowledge receipt on side 2 of the Student Registration/Emergency/ Annual Notification card.

Parent-Teacher Organization

Ortega is fortunate to have an active parent group. All parents are encouraged to participate and support this group's activities. Parent volunteers are needed to serve as classroom assistants, room parents, computer aides, librarians, as well as other positions. A volunteer form is sent home at the beginning of the year so parents can indicate their interests and talents. Please take time to complete the form and return it to school. The PTO supports many school activities: Birthday Recognition, Read-A-Thon, assemblies, field trips, library, science, art, gardening and others.

Police Involvement On School Campuses

School staff will cooperate with law enforcement officers as needed to maintain a safe and orderly environment. Police investigations are conducted independently from the school district and school officials cannot interfere in police investigations. School officials shall provide support and privacy for the student to the extent possible.

RAINY DAY PROCEDURE: During inclement weather, students arriving at school for breakfast will be permitted into the cafeteria at 8:00 a.m. Those students not having breakfast are to report to their classrooms no earlier than 10 minutes prior to their start time.

Report Cards

Report Cards are sent home with students at the end of each trimester grading period. Students in grades K-5 receive report cards for three trimesters.

Snacks and Healthy Foods Policy

We encourage nutritious snacks such as: fruit, raisins, cheese and crackers, trail mix, carrot sticks, and celery sticks. Ortega class parties support a policy in which healthy snacks are strongly encouraged. All students have a snack recess in the morning.

Student Bills

Students are charged with the responsibility of accounting for school materials. Students will be billed for all lost textbooks, library books, and classroom literature books and for all willful destruction of school property including chromebooks. Students must pay for lost or damaged books before a new book will be issued.

Tardiness

A student who arrives after 8:30 a.m. must report to the office for a tardy pass. This pass is necessary to be admitted to class. The office will closely monitor tardiness, and parents of chronically tardy students will be notified.

Visitors

According to state law, all visitors are required to check in at the school office and obtain a Visitor's Badge.

Viewing District Policies Online

The public can view the Pacifica School District Board Policies and Administrative Regulations on-line from the District web site. Visit the District website: <http://www.PacificaSD.org>. Choose "District Information" then "Board Policies and Administrative Regulations." Follow the on-line directions.

HOMEWORK

Philosophy The staff at Ortega Elementary School believes that homework is an important extension of classroom learning. Homework assignments encourage responsibility by providing activities the child can successfully perform independently or with the family, outside the school setting.

We view homework as a positive learning experience and feel that it completes the circle of communication between the child, parent and teacher.

Purpose Homework should supplement, complement, extend and reinforce classroom teaching providing practice, preparation, extension, and enrichment.

Responsibility Homework is a **student** responsibility. Good study habits are learned and last a lifetime.

Time The amount of time needed to complete an average daily homework assignment will vary with each child.

Homework for Absent Students Homework will be provided when students are to be absent more than one day. If you want to request homework please call the office early in the day and let us know how long the student absence will be absent. Homework will be available for pick up from the office after 3:00 p.m. 4th - 5th Students are also encouraged to check with classmates about class assignments when they are absent.

Summary Our goal is to make homework an integral part of a balanced curriculum as well as foster communication between the parent, child, and teacher.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

In a brief handbook, it is difficult to explain the entire instructional program at our school. Back-to-School Night, Parent-Teacher Conferences, and Open House will afford you additional opportunities to hear more thorough explanations. The following is a synopsis, by content area, of the instructional program your child will receive during his/her tenure at Ortega School.

ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

The Ortega Elementary School staff shares the philosophy that listening, speaking, reading, and writing contain crucial skills that cannot be taught in isolation. Therefore, we focus on teaching these skills with an integrated and meaning-centered curriculum based in Reader's and Writer's Workshop. Our responsibilities lie in teaching primary students how to read and write and in teaching intermediate students how to gain fluency and confidence in reading and writing so that they may become independent learners. Ortega staff members are active participants on the District Literacy Team, and are working cooperatively with staff throughout the District to achieve early literacy for all students. The Ortega staff will implement all aspects of Balanced Literacy and 21st Century learning skills.

Teachers enrich the State framework for language arts by using lessons and ideas gained from our balanced literacy program. We believe that students can be taught the various steps of writing and reading using a workshop approach that strives to instruct each student at their level. A wide variety of material is available at Ortega School, including children's literature books, leveled books, and reference books. Throughout the grades we emphasize reading for meaning and for pleasure. Our well-stocked library is an integral part of a reading program.

MATHEMATICS

The goal of our mathematics program is for students to experience the enjoyment and fascination of mathematics as they gain confidence and skills using the Bridges Mathematics curriculum. We believe every student should be exposed to all of the strands of mathematics – numbers, measurement, geometry, patterns and functions, logic, algebra, and statistics and probability on a regular basis.

At Ortega, we believe the early years of mathematics education are critical to children's later attitudes and achievement. Therefore, we incorporate many experiential activities and math games with manipulative materials starting in kindergarten. Children work in small groups to solve problems and work with various materials such as pattern blocks, cubes, dice, geoboards, attribute blocks, number tiles, and calculators. Computer-based programs are also sometimes used to practice computation and develop more effective problem solving strategies. In addition, students explain their thinking, orally and in writing, and build their understanding of mathematics over a long period of time.

HISTORY/SOCIAL SCIENCE

Our history-social science program helps all students to develop their potential for personal, civic, and professional life. Goals of the curriculum include: 1) acquisition of basic knowledge and cultural understanding; 2) understanding democratic and civic values; and 3) skills attainment and social participation.

A variety of materials, resources, strategies, and technologies are used to engage students. Much of the literature used to enhance the curriculum emphasizes heroes, adventure, moral challenges, faraway places and distant times so that students' imaginations are captivated. The elementary program encompasses numerous opportunities for interdisciplinary studies. The history-social science program is augmented with field trips, assemblies, projects, children's literature, and community projects.

SCIENCE

Our new science program, Carolina Building Blocks of Science, is designed to offer students a variety of experiences at all levels, in alignment with NGSS. The curriculum is designed to prepare our students for the future through investigation, collaboration and problem solving. Throughout the TK-5 program, each student is exposed to life,

physical, and earth sciences. We are most fortunate at Ortega in that our students have the opportunity to work in our large science lab and garden/greenhouse area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

The essence of our school site is visible in our student-produced art. Artistic and dramatic products are extensions of teaching experiences in social science, language arts and reading, and science. Hallway exhibits highlight student achievement throughout the year, demonstrating lessons in use of materials, form and function, texture, perspective, and artistic style.

Our Parent-Teacher Organization supports this curriculum with assemblies, and the Pacifica Education Foundation supports Ortega with music and poetry programs. Staff recognizes that artistic achievement is an expressive and imaginative outlet for many children.

MUSIC

Our students in TK-5th grade are provided music education. Mr. Reeves and the Pacifica School District support the TK - 2nd grade program. Mr. U and the Pacifica Education Foundation support the 3rd-5th grade program. The music program prepares our students for a life of music appreciation.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION/HEALTH EDUCATION

Motor skills, fitness, and sportsmanship are emphasized through the Playworks program. This program gives young children additional experience with balance, hand-eye coordination, games, and dance that results in enhanced skills and self-confidence. Students in the upper grades take part in a regularly scheduled PE. Stamina, flexibility, muscle strengthening, game skills, and dance are components of the PE curriculum at Ortega School. Activities de-emphasize winning and losing and stress the importance of self-improvement and activity participation.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Ortega Elementary School proudly hosts a Special Education program, including Special Day classes, for students with special needs. Supports include teacher specialists and instructional assistants, supplemental materials, and computer-assisted learning. Special Education students participate in all school activities and are enrolled in Special Day classes or general education classes.

ORTEGA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CALENDAR
Minimum Days and **Holidays** (Wednesdays are all minimum days)

2023 - 2024

August

16 School Begins! (Minimum Day)
17 - 18 Minimum Day
31 Back to School Night, 6:00 PM

September

01 Minimum Day
04 **Labor Day**

October

6 PD Day – NO SCHOOL
9 **Indigenous Peoples' Day**
31 Halloween

November

9 PD Day – NO SCHOOL
10 **Veteran's Day**
13 - 17 Parent Conferences (Minimum Day)
20 - 24 **Thanksgiving Recess**

December

22 Minimum Day
25 - Jan 05 **Winter Recess**

January

08 School Resumes
15 **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**

February

14 Valentine's Day
16 Minimum Day
19 - 23 **President's Week**

March

11 - 15 Spring Conferences (Minimum Day)

April

5 Minimum Day
8 - 12 Spring Recess

May

2 Open House
3 Minimum Day
27 **Memorial Day, No School**

June

4 - 6 Early Out
6 Last Day of School

[Pacifica School District Calendar 2023 - 2024](#)