

Advanced Learning Opportunities at Olympic Hills

Advanced Learning Opportunities for all. Olympic Hills Elementary integrates above-grade-level Advanced Learning Opportunities into daily classroom experiences for all children. Advanced learners are best served in an environment that develops their abilities without segregating them from membership in their same-aged peer group. A climate of mutual respect among all students contributes to achievement by all.

Teachers cannot perfectly predict which children will be able to grasp an above-grade-level concept at any one point in time. Therefore, to challenge all children to perform to their highest levels, and to be sure we are reaching every child who can benefit from above-grade-level opportunities, our ALO philosophy is fully integrated into all classrooms, for all children.

Differentiated Instruction. In Reading, teaching and learning is organized into small groups at different reading levels. All teachers use "Guided Reading," a process which provides instruction at 26 different levels. The leveled materials are available to all classrooms in order to reach children who may be 1-3 years beyond grade level standards. We keep our class sizes as low as possible so that the teacher can meet the varying needs of these small reading groups. During independent reading time, students select what they would like to read within their specific reading level. Literacy activities are individually adapted to fully challenge all learners. All teachers are trained to utilize the methods described by Fountas and Pinnell ("Guided Reading"), Debbie Miller ("Reading with Meaning") and Stephanie Harvey ("Strategies that Work").

In Writing, students are given daily writing tasks that are open-ended. Students write their own "small moments" experiences, with instruction that is adapted to their individual performance levels. Students receive individualized guidance and feedback to prompt them to perform to their highest abilities. Writing is also integrated into Science, Reading and Social Studies. Students who are writing above grade level are producing more complex journal entries, summaries, science reflections, stories and reports. All teachers are trained in and utilize the methods described by Lucy Calkins ("Units of Study in Writing").

In Mathematics, the Everyday Math curriculum is augmented to include multi-step mathematical tasks to increase problem-solving strategies. Students receive individual and small-group guidance and instruction while working on challenging learning activities. Students who are performing above grade level in mathematics address more advanced problems. Students learn to demonstrate more complex and thorough responses in mathematical thinking.

Homework. Students who are performing above grade level are encouraged to produce more complex responses to homework tasks. Students record reading selections, and time spent on homework projects, on a weekly homework log. Parents/guardians are asked not to explain homework to students. Teachers use homework responses to assess student independent performance, and adjust instruction accordingly.

Performing Arts. In *Instrumental Music*, we provide free loan instruments to all children who wish to play. We enroll 90% of our 4th and 5th grade students in Instrumental Music as a result. Students who demonstrate above-grade-level performance are allowed to move into advanced classes. We also offer *Choir* during the school day for all grade levels, and *Taiko Drum* as a free after-school class for grades 3-5. Music practice also counts as extra credit on Homework time.

Self-Managers. Students are recognized for performing at mature levels in personal responsibility. "Self-Managers" are consistently kind, helpful, safe and responsible. Students who are able to make wise choices receive natural rewards such as being able to study in the hall, going to and from lunch and recess without teacher direction, or having greater choices in the classroom.

Community Service. All students receive training on skills to serve their school community. Students begin by sharing classroom jobs. Students may also opt to assist in the library by shelving books, supervise cross walks as a member of Patrol, assist with the delivery of notes and newsletters, and help younger children with play and social skills at recess.

Advanced Learning in many forms. "Advanced Learners" are not only those students who demonstrate advanced performance in the academic content areas. They are also students who perform above grade level expectations in the Performing Arts, as Self-Managers, or in Community Service. These areas afford all students many opportunities to demonstrate their advancement throughout the Multiple Intelligences. At Olympic Hills, we nurture a school-wide "Advanced Learning Opportunities Philosophy." All children may shine by traveling many different, exciting and challenging pathways.