

Frequently Asked Questions –

Kindergarten & New Families

Q: Do you have a full day kindergarten?

A: Yes, we have a rigorous academic program for our kindergarteners, which lasts the full day.

Q: How and when will I find out what class my child is in?

A: Plan to join us in August for our “Paperwork Palooza”, turn in required paperwork and then receive your child’s class placement here at school, or the classroom assignment will be posted in front of the school on the first day of class.

Q: How do I communicate with my child’s teacher?

A: There will be a colored folder that comes home daily with your child. You can send a note in your child’s folder to the teacher or feel free to call the Main Office and leave a message. The teacher will return the call at their earliest convenience. Your teacher may also choose to communicate through email. They will discuss their preferred method of communication during Back to School Night.

Q: How much homework is given?

A: The amount of homework varies from grade to grade (yes, there is homework in kindergarten) and sometimes from class to class. It is given to reinforce or practice skills learned in class. It is hard to say how long your child will spend getting their homework done, because each student is so different...some knuckle down and get everything done in 20 minutes, others are dawdlers and it feels like torture. Please discuss any homework issues you are having with the teacher. Our kindergarten teachers generally send a packet home on Friday that is due the following week. It is best to get started over the weekend as there will be daily homework due back each day as well as a spelling test on Fridays.

Q: Do kindergarteners have to nap?

A: All kindergarteners have a quiet rest time after lunch. Many do fall asleep. The routine varies a little from class to class, from day to day, and as the kids get older as the year progresses. Generally, the lights are low, music may be playing, and students are resting at their desks or on the carpet for 30-40 minutes.

Q: How do you deal with behavioral issues?

A: We don’t have too many big problems with behavior. We spend a lot of time as a school working on character building at our Friday assemblies and in the classroom. Most teachers use a progressive card turning system to help manage behavior. Every student starts every day with a Green card. A Yellow card (warning) can result if a student has to be warned about behavior (usually more than one time). If the offensive behavior continues, the card can be changed to Red, which usually means a referral to the Office (Phyllis, Toni, or Kathryn). A Blue card usually results in removal from the classroom and a call to parents (and almost never happens!).

Q: Do I have to send my child on the bus?

A: No, you may choose to “valet” your student in the morning or the afternoon. We just ask that you notify the office and/or the teacher that morning (before 12:00pm) of any changes to the regular schedule with regard to the afternoon schedule. The office will notify your child’s teacher of the change by going around in the afternoon to each classroom to announce any changes.

Q: How does the bus work?

A: You should be mailed bus route information over the summer just before the start of school assigning you a route and stop based on your home address. If you need a different route for AM vs. PM, or a dual route because of two households, please call Kathryn to discuss. We can generally accommodate changes for these reasons, but it may take a couple of weeks for these requests to be made because we need to be sure of the availability, and clear it through the Transportation Department.

In the morning, please arrive 5 minutes before your scheduled bus stop departure time. You will need time to park and have your child in line ready to board the bus. In the afternoons, please arrive at least 10 minutes before your scheduled estimated arrival time. If no one is there to pick up your child, they will remain on the bus. The driver will radio Dispatch of the ‘Failure to Receive’ and Dispatch will call the school. Our office will try to locate the parent and coordinate where and when your child may be picked up. Dispatch will advise the driver to continue the route and then return to your bus stop. If no one can be reached, your child will remain on the bus and be brought back up to school. This is for your child’s safety. It can be helpful, once you have made friends with other families at the bus stop, to add those parents to the back of your Emergency Card as authorized to receive your student at the bus stop. Exchange phone numbers with those friends so you can reach out on days when something unexpected comes up.

Generally the K kids sit together in the front of the bus. Each bus driver has rules for their bus, but we do ask that they seat the kindergartners together in the front.

When each bus arrives at school, there is either a TA or school administrator (usually Kathryn, Phyllis, or Toni) that will take all the K kids off first, line them up and walk them directly to the K yard. It is very organized and by the end of the first week, most kids know exactly where to go! At the end of the school day, all teachers walk their students to their assigned bus.

We color code our buses and then tag to each student’s backpack with the corresponding colored tag to help us keep track of which buses our students are boarding in the afternoon. We work on this before school starts so that students receive their tags on the first day of school. The Transportation Plan form is part of the beginning-of-year paperwork, and important to us so that we

Please follow our daily tweets to find out what time the buses left school and/or if there are traffic delays of which we are aware.

Q: How do I order school lunch for your child?

A: You can load money onto your child’s account and check your balance by going to the resource section on our website and selecting “Set up Lunch Account”. You may also send cash (no checks please) in an envelope clearly marked with your student’s name, room number, and instructions to deposit in lunch account to your child’s teacher. You may pack lunches, purchase school lunches, or any combination. Lunch menus are available in our office and on the website. Lunch this year is \$2.75. If a student forgets his/her lunch, the cafeteria will provide a meal for the child to eat and notify parents of the balance due.

Q: Do the teachers/TAs stay with the kids during lunch?

A: The kindergarten teachers are with their classes in the lunch area, and the TAs supervise for the rest of the hour after the kids eat. The lunch area is always supervised for 1st – 5th grade students by our TAs.

Q: What if my child has an allergy or requires daily medication to be taken at school?

A: Please notify the office and your child's teacher of any food allergies or medical conditions. There is a special form to be completed which will be shared with the cafeteria and specially trained staff with regard to food allergies. There is also a form which must be completed each year for students that take or may need medication while at school. Please ask the Main Office for these forms.

Q: Do you have an after school program?

A: We do have a private for-fee program here at school. Kids do homework and then play. If your child is enrolled in Camp, they will be walked by either their teacher or TA to the camp bungalow. We also offer the Beyond the Bell program for students in 2nd-5th grades. Brochures are available in the Main Office.

Q: Are there opportunities to volunteer?

A: Absolutely! There are many ways to be involved at our school and parent support is key to our success. You may volunteer in the classroom – just make sure you discuss with the teacher first...and in kindergarten the teachers may have you wait until after Thanksgiving to volunteer in the classroom to give the students time to transition. You may mentor a student in our CATCH program, serve on various fund-raising committees, or work in the garden or on beautification projects. You may serve as a Room Parent or be on Community Council which is our governing body.

Q: Where do you park for events at school?

A: You may park in the Visitor Lot near the auditorium, or we use the upper yard for most big events. Please respect the volunteers that are directing you to park in a specific area. It is for the safety of our children.

Q: How do you purchase CMCS apparel?

A: It is always for sale in the office and at school events.

Q: Do you have TAs in every class?

A: Yes, our fundraising efforts help pay for our TAs. In kindergarten we have TAs from 8:30-2:00 because the kids are young and require extra support. In 1st – 5th grades we have TAs from 8:30-11:30. The TAs also provide supervision during the recess and lunch breaks.

Q: What reading program do you use?

A: For English Language Arts we use Benchmark. Many teachers also supplement with core literature.

Q: What Math program do you use?

A: We adopted a program called Math Expressions that the teachers are excited about. The program builds a strong conceptual understanding of the principles of mathematics. Many teachers also supplement with other materials.

Q: What enrichment do you provide?

A: I can't guarantee that next year's schedule will look just like this year's, but this year the District provided Dance and Music. We raise funds to also Art, Drama, and Technology. We also fundraise for a dedicated PE teacher. Students have Technology, Library, and PE at least once a week all year. Art, Music, Dance and Drama are on block rotations. Students will have each of those classes for 1/3 of the year. Our 5th graders also participate in a wonderful Ballroom Dancing program.

Q: Do the kids get field trips?

A: Yes, each grade level gets two field trips per year. The school pays for the buses, but parents may be asked to contribute the admission fee (usually \$5-\$10) depending on the destination. Some of this year's trips will include the Port of Long Beach (2nd), Aquarium of the Pacific (3rd), Reagan Library (5th). Field trips are planned to compliment the curriculum. Our 5th graders do take two overnight trips. In September they go to Astro Camp in Idyllwild, and in May they go to CIMI Camp on Catalina. Each trip is for 3 days and 2 nights and costs \$300. We do have scholarships.

Q: Do you have a special program for gifted students?

A: Many of our students are identified as gifted, and we set a very high bar for all our students. While we don't have a special "program", all our teachers differentiate in the classroom to deliver instruction that challenges each child at their level.

Q: Do you accommodate students with special needs?

A: Yes. We have a resource teacher on campus for push-in or pull-out help, and as an LAUSD school, we provide the spectrum of services with the help of our team of itinerant specialists. Please inform our office once you decide to attend our school if your child has special needs.

Magnet Program

Q: How does the magnet point system work?

A: The general guidelines are: Acceptance to magnet schools is done through a weighted lottery process in the Office of Student Integration downtown. Our school has no control over admissions. Four points are given if your home school is overcrowded (few are) or PHBAO (predominately Hispanic, Black, Asian, or other). Three points are given if you will have a sibling enrolled at the school you are applying to for the year in which you are applying. Four points are given each year that you apply and don't get in, with a maximum of 12 points being allowed to accrue. Your student will receive 12 points upon matriculation from our school.

Q: You are a magnet and a charter...what does that mean?

A: We are a full magnet; all of our students are admitted through the Choices application lottery process. We are also an affiliated charter, which means that while we are part of the District, we have some autonomy over certain aspects, such as in budgetary decisions and curricular choices.

Q: Does Community have a focus?

A: Yes, we are a Liberal Arts Magnet with a focus on the arts and humanities.

Q: We are a mixed-race family. Is it better to apply as White or as a minority?

A: It is impossible to know for sure because each year is different depending on our applicants. Forty percent of the students accepted are required to be White, and 60% minority. If you apply as White in a year where most of our applicants happen to be White, your odds are probably not as good as if you had applied as a minority.

Q: Does volunteering help get your child in if they are on the waiting list?

A: No. The waiting list is computerized, and names from the waiting list are only accessible to our Magnet Office in a particular order.

Q: How many students do you accept every year?

A: We admit 72 kindergarteners and 24 4th graders each year, and the few spots at other grade levels that may open up due to attrition. Last year nearly 4,000 students applied to Community Magnet.

Q: How many students do we have?

A: We have three classes at every grade level, k-5. In k thru 3rd grade class size is capped at 24. In 4th and 5th class size increases to 32. Every year we have between 465-480 students.