



OSCS Philosophy

*When interested, a child becomes self-motivated.
Self-motivation leads to becoming self-disciplined.*

*When self-disciplined, a child engages in a process of mastery learning and
develops his or her potential.*

We know that each child is a full and complete individual in his or her own right; and even when very small, deserves to be treated with the full and sincere respect that would be extended to his parents. Respect breeds respect, and creates an atmosphere where learning is tremendously facilitated.

We believe that intelligence is not fixed at birth and that human potential is without limit. In all children, we see an inherent tendency toward discovery, kindness, cooperation and nonviolence. Each day children exhibit the vast wonder of the human spirit, the endless faces of intelligence, creativity, and inventiveness when treated with respect and dignity.

OSCS stands in sharp contrast to the current fervor to use children as measures of adults' performance, where teachers are judged and rewarded by their students' test scores, prescribed standards, and frequently changed State-determined objectives. Parents are required to accept a political definition of teacher effectiveness. Teaching "to" the test and rehearsed test taking may result in schools with test scores which reward the adults with jobs and funding. But what is the cost to the children? Why are so many children under this 'test scores rule!' regime now denied music, art, physical education, practical skills and often history, geography and scientific investigations which are all areas of study that the test makers ignore and consider unimportant. What is a child's daily experience of sitting in classrooms led by anxious or even frightened teachers waiting to be graded by these scores?

In our Charter School, our teachers are evaluated by a different standard, and their pay raises are not tied to the test scores their students achieve. Our teachers are firm at the edges and empathetic at the center, the kind of adults that respond empathetically to the children's feelings, while setting clear and consistent limits. They deliberately model the behaviors and attitudes that they wish to instill in the student, by being exceptionally calm, kind, warm and polite to each child. They facilitate the learning process as resources for impressions, information and experiences, while constantly observing the students for readiness to accelerate their learning. The elementary years are a time of curiosity when the word 'why' becomes very important to them and when children develop their sense of justice and moral reasoning. The teacher becomes a facilitator and guide for students discussing new difficult questions like 'If kindness is important, what can I do when I feel angry?' or 'What can I do when I see someone littering and messing up the park?' The teacher empowers her students to write letters, right the wrongs of others, and take a stand to improve injustices. He or she is primarily responsible for each student's accelerated learning, not the student's test taking ability.

Current brain research encourages adults to establish learning environments that are stimulating and relaxed; intriguing and safe for exploration. Thinking, problem solving, and forming trusted relationships are all possible when a child is in a comfortable and stress-free setting. Our program encourages universal values such as politeness, self-respect, compassion, empathy, honor, individual responsibility and the courage to speak from your heart. We embrace stewardship for the Earth, not only a reverence for the Earth, its waters, and all living things, but a sense of stewardship for the environment based on a conviction of our individual responsibility for the beauty of the land and the health of our ecosystems. Particular attention is given to social development of our students, emphasizing non-violence, non-aggressive behavior, and respect for another's belongings and work. Our curriculum is international in its heritage and

focus, and consciously seeks to promote global understanding. Social responsibility is important to this age group and students explore aspects community service to make a difference in the lives of others and assure the beauty and preservation of our planet. Most of all, our program is based on a method challenging children to extend their unique styles of learning, so in the future they can follow and achieve their dreams.