

Opal School's mission is to strengthen public education by provoking fresh ideas concerning environments where creativity, imagination, and the wonder of learning thrive.

Opal School is neither a program nor a curriculum. It is practice guided by inquiry into a set of values, principles, and student goals.

OPAL SCHOOL'S VALUES

A powerful image of the young child as intelligent, creative and capable with gifts and abilities that the world needs

A belief that children play a central role in the development of their own learning

A deep respect for differences, however they may be expressed

A belief that listening, dialogue and exchange open doors to unimagined possibilities

A view that learning happens when people form relationships with one another, with ideas, materials and the environment

A belief in the rights of children, families and educators to participate together in forming and shaping rich environments of learning, challenge and choice

OPAL SCHOOL'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Opal School's guiding principles for teaching and learning keep the school a living and vital place. They are the core beliefs about teaching and learning from which all school experiences are born. No principle sits in isolation. Each is connected, influenced and shaped by the others. They support an instructional approach based on listening and relationships.

Our guiding principles (listed below) are inspired and influenced by the early childhood schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy, research in the field of neuroscience, and constructivist practices in the United States and beyond.

Children as Protagonists

Children are competent, resourceful and creative with imagination and curiosity about the world around them. They come to school full of experience and wisdom in their natural approaches to make meaning of their lives.

Children as Collaborators

No child lives or learns in isolation. A child is always in search of relationships. Children learn and become themselves through interaction and relationships with other people, ideas, objects and symbols.

Children as Communicators

Children make their thinking visible to us in many ways, including words, drawing, numbers, dance, painting, building, sculpture, shadow play, collage, drama, music and more. Children use many kinds of materials to discover and express what they know, understand, wonder, feel and imagine.

Children & Adults as Researchers & Co-Creators

Our school is a learning community where children and adults collaborate as researchers to co-create and document experiences that have originated from their relationships, challenges and choices. Teachers are engaged in continuous discussion and dialogue. They collect raw data and use this information to plan, prepare, provoke, assess and inform the community of the school's practices, learning, and outcomes.

Families as Partners

Parent participation in the life of the school is essential and takes many forms. The exchange of ideas between families and teachers is vital to development of a learning community. Families have the potential to bring

vitality and richness to the school by contributing distinctive life experiences and wisdoms.

Strong Academics Connected to Quality Relationships

A strong academic program is best supported within a system of reciprocal relationships among people, ideas, the natural and build world, and the content and skills of the disciplines.

Culture of Respect

Respectful agreements and boundaries support the need for physical and emotional safety and order as they are identified, discussed, practiced, and experienced within a culture of listening, dialogue, and exchange between children and adults.

Environment as Teacher

The design and use of space encourages encounters, communication, and relationships. It informs children and adults about possibilities. There is order and beauty in the arrangement of space, equipment and materials.

Documentation as Communication

Careful attention is given to the collective work of children and adults by transcribing dialogue, taking photographs, and making visible the ideas of children in many media. Documentation informs both children, teachers, and the public of children's learning strategies, group learning processes, and learning outcomes. By making the powerful ideas of children visible to the public, children truly become citizens.

Organization as Foundational

The well-designed use of space and organization of materials, schedules, and curriculum are essential to the creation of a school community, where creativity, imagination and learning thrive.

OPAL SCHOOL'S GOALS & EXPECTATIONS FOR OUR STUDENTS

- Discover, cultivate and express the joy and wonder of learning
- Develop an understanding and curiosity about multiple points of view. Have value and empathy for experiences and perspectives different from one's own.
- Collaborate with others to construct ideas and create new knowledge.
- Develop an understanding of our interdependent relationship with the natural world.
- Take action as mindful citizens who care about making contributions to a future that acknowledges living systems as an integrated whole.
- Develop strategies that contribute to the quality of the community by having a keen sense of place, identity and belonging while respecting the rights and identities of others.
- Read the world: Explore ideas and relationships; make connections between known and unknown information.
- Use the written and spoken word with increasing proficiency to communicate ideas, relationships and understandings.
- Uncover and communicate observations, questions, theories and ideas through skillful and imaginative uses of the languages of the arts and sciences, including mathematics.
- Develop an appreciation of and capacity for accuracy, elegant design and efficiency.