

Thornhill Elementary School

5880 Thornhill Drive, Oakland 94611 Ph: 339-6800

Education. Family. Music.

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Dear Parents/Guardians,

As you have so graciously welcomed me into your school, I want to provide you with some of my educational philosophy. Following are what I consider to be the main goals for my work here, and ideals of a school learning community. You might call this a description of my beliefs about education. It's not as detailed as some would like, and probably more wordy than others would prefer. I offer it as some background to possibly help you better understand me and my decisions in guiding our school.

Principal's Mission and Goals

- Maintain Thornhill School's exceptional performance record and improve where needed.
- Listen well to teachers, staff, students and parents
- Increase student achievement and social development
- Lead teacher inquiry about our practice as educators.
- Interrupt inequity of service to children
- Support and challenge my teachers
- Make decisions that reflect a common vision of learning for all.
- Have the courage to be direct and honest with myself and others
- Trust and involve others in important decisions and important work
- Show caring for everyone around me
- Guide parents toward authentic school involvement and partnership in the learning of their child.

Characteristics of an Ideal School: Goals Toward Which We Strive

Teaching and Learning

Our school is for learning. Every teacher and classroom has the necessary materials/resources to excite students for learning. Everyone considers instructional time to be precious and not easily available for non-instructional time. All children are on grade level or are receiving the support to get there. Parents include nightly reading with their children. We make use of technology to support student learning. We emphasize conceptual learning over mere memorization. We establish explicit learning goals for our students and monitor our progress towards them. We provide intervention support for students not meeting standards and enrichment for those who have mastered expectations.

Personal Learning

We take time to learn for ourselves and thus are models for our children. We establish explicit learning goals, monitor our progress towards them, and share our learning experiences with our children. We recognize the large effect our learning can have on our children.

Interdependence in the Learning Community

Families and teachers share in the responsibility for learning for all children, and thus share in all successes and all failures. We make time for conferences and other communications needed for the progress of our children. We also recognize that each student is responsible for their own behavior and learning, as is developmentally appropriate. We follow school calendars, policies, and guidelines designed to help our children succeed. Rather than blame and find fault, we solve problems and learn. We're in this together!

Interpersonal Respect

We demonstrate our kindness and respect of others by not talking about them outside of their presence. We avoid bad-mouthing, criticizing or judging others and their ideas/positions, but rather seek to understand their point of view. Gossip is bullying. We have the courage to bring our concerns directly to, and only to, the persons with whom we have the concern. We keep adult issues among adults and do not involve children in adult conversations and conflicts. We remain calm in difficult situations. We are kind and respectful towards each other. We have the courage to be vulnerable and apologize when necessary.

Community Building

We provide a safe and nurturing environment for a large number of adoptive, gay/lesbian, mixed-heritage and single-parent families, as well as traditional families. We spend social time with Thornhill friends and families in order to build our relationships with one another. Our children go to school together and plan together. We support the growth of our children's social relationships by being inclusive of other children and encouraging our own to branch out into new relationships. We invite each other. We exchange social courtesies. We emotionally support each other and celebrate life and learning together. Thornhill is a place of belonging for all.

As with all philosophies and guiding principles, this set is ever-evolving. Please feel free to engage me in discussion and inquiry into why I believe as I do. I love to talk about our work!

Mel Stenger, Principal
Thornhill Elementary School