

# THE ARROW OHLONE

teaching hearts and minds together

## Calendar

### Thursday, May 5

8:00AM–3:30PM Spring Book Fair

### Friday, May 6

8:00AM–1:30PM Spring Book Fair

### Friday, May 6

8:20–10:00AM PTA General Association Meeting

### Saturday, May 7

10:00AM–12:00PM May Fete Parade and PiE Fair

### uesday, May 10

7-8:30PM Site Council MeetinSaturday, May 14

10–11:15AM Ohlone Family Orchestra

### Sunday, May 15

5:30–7:30PM Family Bingo Night

### Tuesday, May 17

7–9:00PM PTA Executive Board Meetin

### Saturday, May 21

4–7:00PM Spring Fling Picnic

### Tuesday, May 24

7–9:00PM Farm Council Meeting

### Tuesday, May 31

3:00–4:30PM Joint Staff & Site Council Meeting

### Saturday, June 4

9:00AM–1:00PM Farm Work Day

### Tuesday, June 7

8–9:00AM Parent Coffee

### Wednesday, June 8

10:30AM–12:30PM Fifth Grade Promotion Ceremony

### Thursday, June 9

10:30AM–12:00PM Fifth Grade vs. Staff Softball Game

### Thursday, June 9

12–3:00PM Fifth Grade Promotion Party

### Thursday, June 9

Minimum Day—Last Day of School for Students!!

## Bill's Message

### Meeting Individual Needs & Classroom Placement

Dear Ohlone Families,

I feel like I say this in every Arrow, but where does the time go? Here it is May, with only a short time left before we send everyone off to summer break. It's hard to believe that we're almost at the end of another school year.

This issue of the Arrow contains two articles from me. The first is about some of the work that is happening behind the scenes and how we're continually striving to better meet individual student needs. The second is one I wrote last year about our placement process and some of the thinking that goes on behind the scenes annually as we begin to think about the following year. I hope they give you some insight into some current activities and concerns of the teaching staff.

#### •Better Meeting Individual Student Needs

For the past two years, the teaching staff has been involved in various discussions and activities related to our children, their needs, and how best to meet them. We've had discussions about how our VTP kids are doing; about how to teach developmentally; about how to better address social-emotional needs; about the core curriculum standards and how to teach to those, specifically about what our kids need mathematically; about addressing gender issues; about differentiation; about the continuums each student is on and how to assess them; about our best practices in math and literacy; and more. We've read professional articles related to guided reading, the developmental approach, and project-based learning, and had several guest speakers. Our focus has been, and will continue to be, on how to meet the diverse needs of our student body.

Some time last year the Palo Alto Unified School District was found to be out of compliance with the State of CA for having an imbalance in the number of students of color that are enrolled in special education compared with the rest of the district. While this was not great news, the resulting plan to remedy this has

become a wonderful opportunity for everyone in the district, including those of us here at Ohlone. It gave us extra incentive to reflect upon what we do to meet individual needs and to improve our practices.

In the beginning of the year we created our own SD-CEIS committee (Significantly Disproportionate-Coordinated Early Intervention Services) that is made up of our school psychologist, our resource specialist, our speech and language therapist, teacher representatives from all of the grade levels, and me. While the district has arranged for three full days this past year for each school's SD-CEIS committee to plan and strategize, we have also been meeting every Monday afternoon to continue and expand our dialogue. We're excited about the modifications to our student referral process that we're considering, as well as what the district is coming up with. We think that it will improve communication and how concerns are addressed. We've also created a resource book of interventions that teachers can use. We're hoping to make some of these available to parents in the future as well. We're planning to have a parent meeting in the fall to introduce the improvements to everyone.

In conjunction with this, I've been meeting periodically with the PTA presidents and our special education liaisons. We've had some wonderful discussions and brainstorming about how we can communicate better and, as a result, have a better idea of how to help our children. We're presently planning some interesting student activities for the fall to help them learn to be more accepting and tolerant of others. This goes well with our core values.

What I've just described as happening behind the scenes is but a small portion of the reflection, discussion, and modification processes that have been occurring. The details of all of them would fill more than a few Arrow issues. All of this is very exciting to me, and I look forward to telling you all about it in the fall and in future editions of the Arrow. In the meantime, we all are continuing our personal and professional journeys with our charge to make Ohlone the best learning environment for each and every student.

#### •Making Next Year's Classes:

#### A Great Challenge for Teachers Using an Imperfect Science

(Originally printed in April, 2010)

Dear Ohlone Families,

It's hard to believe, but it's that time of year when at least some of the teachers' attention turns to next year. It's placement time. This is a period of weeks during the month of May when teachers gather to look at next year's entire class (for example, all 140-or-so 4th and 5th graders) and to try to create classes that are balanced. This is a monumental challenge that takes an abundance of time, energy, and emotion.

Over the years, these have proven to be some of the most challenging times for teachers. They each spend hours listening to your input; thinking about your child's needs, strengths, and social skills; discussing each child with cluster-mates; and, often, agonizing over the class in which your child might best thrive. I have seen placements where teachers cry openly and even argue aloud. While the teaching staff is extraordinarily respectful of each other, relationships are at times tested during this period. We all feel a deep connection with each of your children, and where they go after they leave us is extraordinarily important.

The overarching goal of placing students is to create balanced classes. "Balance" means a lot of different things. It means not only balanced by gender, but also by interests, by strengths, by grade, by whether or not students have had a two-year experience with the same teacher, by siblings that have had the same teacher, by special needs, by social make-up, and, if possible, by established friendships. As you might imagine, this is not an easy process, and it's definitely not one for the faint of heart. It is also not a perfect science. Gender numbers alone don't always allow us to have equal numbers of boys and girls in each room.

One source of input comes from your discussions with your child's present teacher. Over the years, we've discouraged receiving input from you about specific teachers for two main reasons. The first is that we try really hard not to give the impression that the teacher

you feel is best for your child is the actual teacher he or she will get. As you can see from the above criteria, it is extremely challenging to give everyone his or her first choice. We also discourage discussion about specific teachers since much of the input received is based on impressions, short observations, or the experience of others. Obviously, each child's experience with a teacher is a unique one. Remember also that our main goal is to create balanced classes throughout an entire grade level.

The kind of input that is important to hear from you, though, is what you feel is the best environment for your child. Based on what you know, it is helpful to inform or remind us about his/her social and emotional status, his/her strengths and interests, historically positive and challenging relationships, and areas that you feel need attention. Things happening in the family or anticipated changes that might occur are also helpful. All of this input is "thrown into the information hopper" so to speak, and then each child is tentatively placed in what appears to be the best fit. Again, considering the bigger picture is equally important to who is in which classroom.

Even with the hours of work and thoughtful consideration, this process still exists as an imperfect "science." It is not one done lightly or without a great deal of effort and concern. We believe, though, that it is still better to give our best effort and attention than to leave it up to one person, chance and luck, or some other less thoughtful system. We appreciate your continued trust that your children are well cared for and have at least one advocate in this process.

We appreciate your patience in waiting to hear where your child has been placed. I know that it can make for a somewhat anxious summer, as anticipation for children can be both exciting and annoying. But, unfortunately, changes are made throughout the spring and summer. As you know, with children new information can appear at some very inconvenient times.

As we go into this season of taking a glimpse at next year, let's all recognize that we may not get our first choice for our child's teacher, that every teacher here at Ohlone, and in PAUSD for that matter, is top-notch and extraordinarily talented in some way, and that a tremendous amount of time, attention, and effort is

given in an attempt to create 26—soon to be 27—of the most balanced classes possible.

I hope this helps you understand what goes into the placement process. Your children are in caring hands.

### Final Remarks

I hope that this set of Arrow articles give you some insight into the level of commitment and dedication the entire staff holds. Ohlone is a very exciting and special place that continues to grow in new, and even better, ways daily. Have a great spring, and enjoy the rest of the school year.

Take care,

Bill



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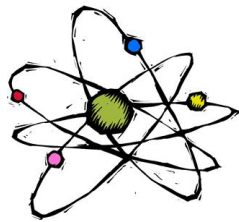
# Notes from Your PTA

—Jane Dick

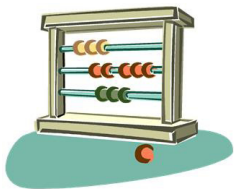
Come to the last PTA General Meeting of the school year: **Friday, May 6 at 8:20 AM in ROOM 28 (the portable between Rooms 18 & 19)**. At this meeting, you will be electing next year's Executive Board, and we will update you on our work so far this year. Coffee, tea, and snacks, as always! Younger siblings welcome.

Few Ohlone volunteer jobs are more glamorous or honored than Lice Check! A huge thank you to **Mathangi Rajagopal**, who is our Lice Check coordinator, and to all the parents who have searched heads on early mornings throughout the year. Our last school-wide lice check happened on April 22.

How lucky we are to have such robust Math and Science Nights for our families! Under the guidance of **Tanya Buxton** and **Hayley Gans**, a large team of parent-volunteers, and some willing and enthusiastic 4th and 5th graders, Science Night had our facilities bursting at the seams with kids and adults trying their hands at various scientific experiments, projects, and demonstrations. **David Yen** and his dedicated team of math enthusiasts



brought us another annual favorite in Math Night, with hands- (and minds-) on activities to stimulate our math thinking in new and fun ways. Thank you to all who made both evenings possible.



This was the second year for incoming-Kinder “screenings” at Ohlone. The K/1 teachers get a chance to meet with incoming Kinders for an hour, which helps them with class placements for next year. A warm, welcoming group of current Ohlone parents volunteered to host the parents of the incoming-Kinders during the screenings. It's been a wonderful time to welcome the new families to Ohlone, to catch up with current Ohlone parents who also have incoming Kinders, to answer lots of questions, and to explain a bit about the Ohlone community. Warm thanks to the Hospitality Committee members who provided wonderful food and to the hosts: **Heike Enders, Laura Landolfi, Grace Mah, Carrie Coltman, Lillian Hom, David**

**Song, Nico Janik, Jade Chao, Stefanie Bastian, Sara Armstrong, Raji Ramamurthi, Ganka Hadjipetrova, Jennifer Sampson, Kristin Meier, and Mariko Yang.**

The annual school play has just wrapped up a really fantastic “run” of five performances.

Under the guidance of the Palo Alto Children's Theatre (PACT) Outreach Residency program, almost 90 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders collaborated in the cast and tech crew to bring us a new telling of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, 1950's-style. For seven weeks, the kids, professional theatre staff, and our fabulous parent-volunteer Producers, **Carol Leonard** and **Cindy Greig**, worked together to act, move, and play in new, imaginative ways, eventually telling us a fun, lively story. Many thanks to **ej Taylor** (PACT Assistant Director), **Mariana Osorio** and **Lane Pianta** (directors of this production), **Cindy** and **Carol**, **Barbara Best** (volunteer backstage supervisor), the PACT technical and costume staff and ticket office, and the many parents who pitched in to assist with rehearsals, performances, chair set up, bake sales, ticket sales, program editing, “strike,” and the cast/crew party. Bravo, everyone!



**Beth Heron** worked with the Site Council and **Principal Bill** in bringing the first of a three-part series of parent education events on Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) for Families, by Alex Russell of Six Seconds (also an Ohlone parent). Stay tuned early next school year for information on the next two evenings, exploring ways we can support at home the concepts of SEL that are in action at Ohlone.

As always, we hope you and your family were able to enjoy one or more of these opportunities during April! We hope to see many of you at our last PTA General Meeting of the year (our “Annual Meeting”) on Friday morning, May 6. It's an important one, as you'll be electing your PTA Executive Board for 2011-12.

# Ohlone Family Orchestra

—Bibiana Lee

Mark Your Calendars—SATURDAY, MAY 14  
from 10–11:15 AM

This is a FREE event!

Ohlone Family Orchestra is an annual spring event conducted by Ohlone parent Jindong Cai, Stanford University's Director of Orchestral Studies. Musical talents from Ohlone families and friends come together for a workshop-like music making session. All ages and levels are welcome.

There will be a box of music folders for different orchestral instruments ready for pick up in the office next week. Please also take and fill out the Photo Release form and bring it on May 14. Ask Barbara or Chrys if you are unable to locate the box. Take home the folder of sheet music for your instrument, and ask your music teacher or parent to help you practice your part.

On Saturday May 14, Jindong Cai (who selected the pieces for this occasion) will assemble the musicians in the MP Room. Get ready for some fun and music making as the ensemble gets together. This is your opportunity to play under Jindong's baton and experience his magic.

Remember to bring your instruments and music stands.

Refreshments will be provided.

Questions? Email [bibianalee@earthlink.net](mailto:bibianalee@earthlink.net) or call 650-561-4183

## Come Join the Fun at the May Fete!

The May Fete Parade will take place in downtown Palo Alto on **Saturday morning, May 7**. This year's parade theme is "Books are Hidden Treasures—Dig In!" and Ohlone's entry is "Snow White's Garden of Books." After the parade, PiE hosts an annual Fair at Addison Elementary. For details about where and when to meet your fellow Ohlone parade marchers, please check the Ohlone e-News.

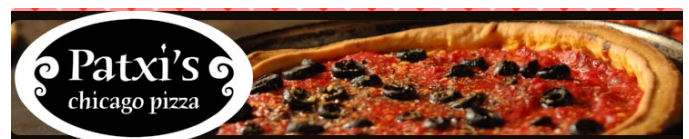


## Patxi's Fundraiser a Success!

—Carol Uyeno

The Patxi's restaurant fundraiser on March 29 raised \$529.40 for Ohlone, with over 70 pizzas delivered to our doorsteps (an all-time delivery record for Patxi's Palo Alto). Many gathered in small groups to share pizzas. Some reported that attending traditional restaurant fundraisers was difficult for them, and that they loved this easy, eat-at-home option as well as the delicious pizza. Ohlone helped to make this the Patxi corporation's second highest donation day for their "52 Weeks of Giving" campaign. Thank you to all of those who pre-ordered in advance and participated in this final restaurant fundraiser of the year. Extra thanks go to those who responded to last-minute personal email appeals!

This year's restaurant fundraisers raised over \$1,600 for the Ohlone PTA and helped bring together the Ohlone community. Thank you again for your participation.



# 5th grade class gift

--Farish Haydel & Leslie Matlof,  
5th grade coordinators

Drum roll please.... As you may know, the fifth graders traditionally give a gift to the school with money raised at the spring fling ice cream sales. This year, Ohlone fifth grade parents **Laura Wingard** and **Jane Smith** helped guide the fifth graders through the process of selecting a class gift - first soliciting ideas from all 5th graders, then narrowing down to 5 choices that were appropriate for the school (sadly a hippo for the farm, a slurpee machine and a water slide were nixed). Then, the 5th graders were able to vote. The mural idea was selected by a wide margin over planting trees, providing soccer goals and extra balls, buying bean bag chairs for the library and donating the money raised to the school



Morgan, from **Murals by Morgan** (<http://www.muralsbymorgan.com/>), will be coming to Ohlone on May 10th or 11th at lunchtime to brainstorm with the 5th graders what they'd like to have in the mural. She'll then do 3 mock up drawings and come back the following week at lunchtime and the 5th graders will pick their favorite. During the first week of June, the mural will be painted in 2 days while the kids are at school.

Please support the 5th graders in their class gift, by coming to the spring fling and purchasing ice cream sundaes on Saturday May 21st!

## 4th Grade Parent Help at Promotion?

It has been a tradition for parents of 4th graders to provide some refreshments following the Ohlone Promotion ceremony for the 5th grade families on Wednesday June 8th. We have a few families who have already signed up to bring some finger foods, but are looking for a few more parents to help with overall coordination and setup. Please see <http://tinyurl.com/PromoRefreshPlanning> for more information. If you are able to help, please email us at [ohlone.5thgrade@gmail.com](mailto:ohlone.5thgrade@gmail.com).

## What's Goin' On at the Farm



### Buttercup

One of our farm sheep, died peacefully on the farm Monday. Her health had been failing rapidly, We will remember her fondly.

All our teachers have been notified of this loss, and a memorial is being planned. The Ohlone community will be notified when the details have been finalized.

# OHLONE FAMILY ORCHESTRA

MAY 14, 2011

10–11:15 AM

Conducted by Jindong Cai Director of Orchestral Studies, Stanford



## CALLING ALL MUSICIANS

Bring your instrument, friends, &  
family to join the ensemble!

Bring your music stand if you have one,  
and pick up music for your instrument  
from the office.

Questions?

Contact [bibianalee@earthlink.net](mailto:bibianalee@earthlink.net) (650 561 4183)



# **“Beat It” Bingo**

## Michael Jackson Style

Sunday, May 15, 5:30-7:30 MP Room  
Taco Dinner

Come ready to sing, dance and play  
Family Fun and Prizes

For questions... please contact Erica Pelavin at [erica.pelavin@gmail.com](mailto:erica.pelavin@gmail.com)

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Family Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Dinner (Tacos and/or enchilada, beans, salad, cookie & a drink) & 1 Bingo card per person: \_\_\_\_\_ x \$10 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

No thanks to dinner, but I'd like to play Bingo: \_\_\_\_\_ x \$5 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(Unlike in past years, we will not be selling extra bingo cards.)

Drop off in office....Thanks. Please Make Checks payable to Ohlone PTA

Be Green and bring your own plate and utensils!! Thanks



Please join us for a fun evening at

# SPRING FLING!

Saturday, May 21 2011

4:00 to 7:00 PM

Kids' Talent Show

Face Painting

Water Balloon Toss

Ice Cream

And much more!!

Come try our new Caterer:  
**Tootsie's at Stanford Barn**

