



Palo Brea School Philosophy

Palo Brea School was created to support and enhance the intellectual, physical, emotional, social, ethical and spiritual wellbeing of the children, families, and staff it serves. We believe that meaningful and enduring education comes from experiencing joy and having fun through learning situations that involve mind, body and spirit. We believe children have an inherent desire to learn – a desire that is, unfortunately, very often thwarted or misunderstood in our culture. Therefore, our teachers and mentors are dedicated to trusting children and providing a curriculum that honors the sacred learning of childhood.

Palo Brea's educational philosophies are based on the work of Richard Louv, Michael Cohen, Joe Heimlich, David Sobel, and the myriad others who believe that children should learn by doing. Like these childhood and experiential education advocates, we believe that children must get outside and into nature. We believe that children should explore, inquire, and experiment in the natural world as so many have before them. We believe that only through real-life and first-hand learning can a child be truly connected to his/her world. At Palo Brea School, we believe that nature inspires: wonder; joy; trust in one's inherent wisdom; and a love and care for self, others, animals, and the earth. Studies have shown that children are calmer, think more clearly, are less frustrated and exhibit fewer attention difficulties when they are given opportunities to explore nature and their environments.

In addition to nature, the students at Palo Brea learn to live among one another and create their own social structures. They learn pro-social behavior and solve problems, not by being told how to do so, but by actually being given the tools and opportunities to do so. The students are respected and treated fairly by teachers, mentors, and one another. They learn to love and help the people, the immediate environment, and the world they live in. Students are empowered to create change and to trust in themselves as they grow in mind, body, and spirit.

Their interests and needs are the primary focus of the school and it is the children on which we base our core curriculum.

Teaching/Curriculum Philosophy

Rather than providing lessons based on rote memorization and the acquisition of facts, Palo Brea's curriculum provides its students real-life experiences that directly engage their holistic well-being processes. Human beings learn best when they are relaxed, safe, unhurried, inspired, joy-filled, and in a setting that compliments and reinforces their true essence.

Instead of focusing on a standardized national norm, each student's abilities, learning styles, wishes, interests and needs are taken into account when creating the curriculum and daily plans. Homework and lessons are adjusted accordingly. A monthly curriculum plan is considered a blueprint onto which new lessons and ideas can be added, changed, or eliminated in lieu of more appropriate choices.

Teachers'/Mentors' Guiding Principles

Our teachers and mentors genuinely enjoy children, appreciate childhood, and understand how children learn. They regard their roles as teachers and mentors as a sacred and revered opportunity to guide and behold children throughout their educational journey. They are excited and respecting as they witness children discovering who they are and what they choose to be for others.

Teacher-Student Relationship

We believe in the importance of the teacher-student relationship - understanding that children are naturally drawn to learn from an authentically passionate teacher. We know that children emulate the adults in their lives and learn most from what the adults, themselves, *are doing* and how the adults *are being* than from what the adults *are telling* them to do or be. The inner-life (emotionality, spirit, personal qualities) of the teacher speaks volumes to the child – and it is this inner-life that Palo Brea strengthens and supports so effortlessly through its curriculum.