

Principal: Jessica Richardson
Assistant Principals:
Kasey Baker
Zachary Strom



355 Landrum Lane
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July 31, 2017

Dear Ocean Palms Families,

Welcome to the 2017-2018 school year! It is my sincere hope that you and your children were able to enjoy all the summer months had to offer. June and July have been extremely busy for the summer staff of Ocean Palms. Our school grounds and buildings receive intense cleaning and revitalization each summer, our technical equipment is in constant need of updating, refreshing, and installation, and our school staff and student population are expanding. Creating and cultivating an environment where everyone can learn and grow for the next 180 days is our top priority! Whether your summer was filled with lazy days and vacations, or you were busy like us, possibly in the midst of transitioning to a new home and community, we are eagerly anticipating your arrival on August 10th.

The mission statement of Ocean Palms reads, ***Everyday. Everyone. Everything Matters.*** This school was founded on the principle that the growth and development of every child would be a focus for all. Ocean Palms continues to be a top performing "A" rated school in the state of Florida and the St. Johns County School District has maintained its ranking as the top performing district in the state of Florida. Research tells us academic achievement cannot occur without strong relationships, character development and intrinsic motivation. Ocean Palms is a school where every child's academic, social, and emotional growth are significant factors that drive the decisions and choices that we make. Building relationships, cultivating student leaders, and offering curriculum to meet the needs of each student set the precedent for our school's mission and vision.

For those families new to Ocean Palms, please know that you are not alone! For the past three years we have welcomed approximately 100 new students over each summer and another 50-75 students throughout each school year. Increasing enrollment has provided us the opportunity to increase our staff and this year, we are thrilled to welcome over thirty new employees to the Ocean Palms family. Whether you have been at Ocean Palms for many years, or this is your first year, it will be important for all of us to be deliberate about making connections, becoming involved and collaborating with each other, and finding time to celebrate our accomplishments and successes throughout the year. I am extremely grateful to the dedicated staff, parents, PTO and community partners who have already invested time, effort, and their expertise to ensure our doors are ready to open on August 10th.

As mentioned previously, it has been a summer of hiring for Ocean Palms. We have had the privilege of securing experienced and highly qualified teachers, administrators, and support staff throughout May, June, and July. With a school of close to 1,100 students, we are fortunate to now have two Assistant Principals and two Guidance Counselors. With the addition of six new classrooms,

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that were installed in the spring, we have hired teachers at almost every grade level. We will continue to utilize the Associate Teacher model as a way to bring down the student to teacher ratio in classes that are over 18 in K – 3rd grade and classes that are over 22 in 4th – 5th grade. As we begin the school year, I know we have just the right people in place to serve and support our students. I could not be more proud to welcome our school staff and our school families.

Ocean Palms Elementary is committed to providing an interactive, challenging, and equitable learning environment for our students. Through the generous support of our school community, under the leadership of our PTO, we have been able to maintain our focus on student learning gains through technology integration, both with hardware and software that target individualized student growth. Classrooms in grades K-2 have approximately 6 tablet devices and our 3-5 classrooms have approximately 8 laptop devices. We will be able to continue successful implementation of instructional software, including Achieve 3000 and RAZ kids, along with the reading comprehension curriculum, Making Meaning, for our 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade classrooms. A beautiful new outdoor classroom space, equipped with a shade structure, should be ready for students by opening day. Maintaining our educational environment, rooted in research and best practices, would not be attainable without the continuous support and trusted relationships with our business partners, community members, and school families. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

Logistics for Next Week

Students entering Pre-K, ESE, and 1st-5th grades, will receive a welcome email from their child's teacher on Monday, August 7th. These emails will be delivered between 2:30 and 3:30 p.m. This will let you know the room number of your child's class and provide a link to the teacher's bio page, found on our school website. We encourage you to read this email with your child and review the bio to learn more about their teacher. **Every kindergarten student will receive a letter in the mail notifying you of your child's staggered start day and information about Kindergarten Orientation.** It is extremely important to respond to your teacher's email or letter so we can verify you have received the information you need. **Please respond, via email, to your child's teacher, no later than the afternoon of Tuesday, August 8th.**

Meet the Teacher for ALL STUDENTS will take place on Wednesday, August 9th. We will welcome our 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade students and families from 8:00 - 9:30 a.m., 4th and 5th from 9:30 - 11:00 p.m., and Kindergarten from 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. If you pre-ordered your school supplies, they will be delivered to your child's classroom. If you did not pre-order school supplies, please bring all supplies to classrooms on August 9th. On the 9th, we will also have a mini book fair set up in the Cafeteria, where the PTO will be present with membership and committee information, and school

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spirit apparel. **School planners are provided by PTO and will be delivered to classrooms for students in grades 2nd-5th.**

Representatives from **School Transportation** will also be available to answer any questions about bus routes. You will even be able to meet your driver and see your actual bus! We will have a **Welcome Back Walk-About Checklist** ready for each student to ensure you have completed all the necessary "steps" prior to the first day of school. Orientation information and Grade Level Supply Lists can be found on the Ocean Palms homepage: <http://www.ope.stjohns.k12.fl.us/>

At Meet the Teacher, your child will receive a first day folder. Please review both sides of your student's first day folder for important information, some of which needs to be returned to school as soon as possible. If your child has any medical concerns, please visit or contact our school nurse, Alice Fasula at 547-3766 or alice.fasula@stjohns.k12.fl.us

The first day of school is Thursday, August 10th for all 1st - 5th grade students, as well as, our Pre-K and ESE classrooms. We want to remind kindergarten parents that the first full week for our kindergarten students starts on Wednesday, August 16th. We will implement a flexible first week schedule for Kindergarten, as approved by the School Board.

If you are in need of before or after care services for your students, please consider enrolling them in the **Ocean Palms Elementary D.E.N. (D**eveloping, **E**nriching, and **N**urturing the students of OPES). All information about this program is located at: <http://www.ope.stjohns.k12.fl.us/extendedday/>

We will continue to provide multiple opportunities for **After School Enrichments**. These enrichments are fee based and facilitated by private vendors and some of our own teachers. A full brochure of offerings will be sent home in student folders within the first few weeks of school.

The Home Access Center (HAC) offers parents in grades 3 - 5 the opportunity to monitor their child's academic performance. New 4th and 5th grade parents and ALL 3rd grade parents need to register for HAC at <http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/hac/>. **HAC is how all parents of 3rd-5th grade students will view grades, interims, and report cards.** Paper copies are not sent home. Please take time to register and activate this important resource. All HAC passwords are required to contain at least three of the four following types of characters; lower case, upper case, numeric, and/or a special

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character. If you have any questions regarding this process, there are tutorials on the school district website or you can contact Vicki Morales at 547-3767 or vicki.morales@stjohns.k12.fl.us. HAC is currently offline, but will reopen for Ocean Palms families on Monday, August 14th.

The school day starts at 8:30 a.m. and ends at 2:50 p.m. Classrooms will be open to students at 8:20 a.m. with the school day officially beginning at 8:30 a.m. If students are not in their classroom at 8:30 a.m., they will be marked tardy. The school day will end at 2:50 p.m. on M, T, Th, and F. **Every Wednesday is early release at 1:50 p.m.** Student supervision begins at 8:00 a.m. If your child needs to arrive prior to 8:00 a.m., they will need to register and participate in the early morning care provided through the Ocean Palms Elementary D.E.N., our before and after school program. ***Students are encouraged to arrive by 8:20 am in order to be unpacked and ready to learn at 8:30 am.***

If your child will be a **bus rider**, you can visit the school district's website to access routing information at www.stjohns.k12.fl.us. All eligible bus riders should have received transportation information last week. If you have not received your bus information, please visit: <http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/transportation/routes/>

There will no longer be any bus passes written. The School District has implemented a **Provisional Transportation Waiver** system. Any student that needs to ride to a location other than their assigned bus stop, will be required to complete a waiver. This process is entirely online and controlled through the Transportation Department, not at the school level. For a Transportation Waiver, please visit: <http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/transportation/ptwaiver/>

We encourage parents to join PTO, participate in our School Advisory Council (SAC), and become a classroom volunteer or chaperone. **Please remember that all visitors to the school must be approved by the School District and enter the building through the front office.** Visit our webpage to complete a School Access Form located under the Volunteer Information section. <http://www-ope.stjohns.k12.fl.us>

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School Messenger is the automated phone message system used for updates, reminders, and in case of emergencies. A School Messenger message will be sent on Monday, August 7th. If you do not receive these phone messages, emails, or texts, please contact our registrar, Vicki Morales at 547-3767 or vicki.morales@stjohns.k12.fl.us

DATES TO REMEMBER

Monday, August 7th - Welcome email from teachers will be sent between 2:30 and 3:30 p.m.

Wednesday, August 9th - Meet the Teacher for all students.

- 8:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. - 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades
- 9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. - 4th and 5th grades
- 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. - Kindergarten

Thursday, August 10th - First Day of School for all students in 1st – 5th grades, Pre-K and ESE. 8:20 a.m. - 2:50 p.m., 1st day of staggered start for Kindergarten

Wednesday, August 16th - Begin first full week for all Kindergarten students

Wednesday, August 16th 8:45 AM Boo Hoo/Woo Hoo Breakfast for Parents/Newcomers PTO Event

Tuesday, August 29th - Curriculum Chats for grades 3rd-5th 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, August 31st - Curriculum Chats for grades Pre-K - 2nd 6:00-7:30 p.m.

Thank you in advance for your support of our school, our staff, and our students. It is a true honor to serve as the leader of this incredible school. I look forward to seeing everyone soon and getting to know all of our new Otters! Until next time, be well.

Sincerely,

Jessica Richardson - Principal