

Union Street Charter

Philosophy & Curriculum

Philosophy

We believe a child's educational attitudes and future success in learning are grounded in the primary years. We provide a nurturing environment which fosters high self-esteem and confidence. We have small class sizes (17 or less) to ensure an individualized education. We minimize the use of academic competition. We believe a balanced arts program builds skills for academics: creativity, focus, organization, observation, self-expression and perseverance.

Our teachers are empowered to design innovative lessons that peak a child's natural curiosity, develop new curricular materials, work collaboratively with parents and community volunteers, and take responsibility for the school as a whole. We develop a direct relationship with families through parent volunteering in the classrooms, on field trips, on camping trips, etc.

Curriculum

Language Arts:

- Our K-3 classroom teachers draw from a variety of resources to teach literacy at our school. Most of the curricula are aligned with Science of Reading research. We have adopted a phonemic awareness curriculum, Heggerty, in grades K-2. Our current reading curricula include Literacy Footprints in Kindergarten and Bridge to Reading in 1st grade. Our reading intervention teachers are trained in and use resources from the Orton-Gillingham method. In grades K-1, we rely heavily on a phonics-based curriculum, which includes substantial direct instruction to give students a solid foundation for learning to read and write.
- Literature based reading program 3rd - 5th grades
- Writing emphasized
- Meaningful assignments based on Lucy Calkins writing curriculum
- Annual yearbook publication of student writing
- Class student author celebrations and presentations

Science:

- Experiment Based: Making Observations, Recording Results, Testing Hypothesis
- Units include: Bees & Ladybugs, Light and Sound, Habitats, Soil Science, Watersheds/Salmon, Animal Adaptation, Energy & Engineering, Human Growth, and Planets
- Amplify Seeds of Science & Roots of Reading - proven to increase reading skills

Math:

- University of Chicago Everyday Math
- Hands on games and projects to build conceptual foundations
- Balance of CA standards & developmental needs

Social Studies:

Our goal is to foster an expanding awareness of the world around us and our place in it by learning about the human experience and studying a variety of peoples' history and culture.

- Humboldt county history
- The globe and geography
- Native American culture
- Diversity and equity
- Family history
- Global citizens
- Taiwan sister school

Physical Education:

- Emphasize games: soccer, basketball, 4 square, tetherball, kickball, and tag games
- Emphasize skills for playing these games & skills-based P.E. lessons
- Encourage positive attitude toward competition
- Encourage cooperation and caring

The Arts:

- Spanish, music and art in all grades twice per week
- Yearly classroom plays or poetry performance in K - 3rd grades
- Large drama production for 4th & 5th grade at the Arcata Playhouse
- Guest artists visit the school: Musicians, storytellers, Quack and Wabbit, art docents, and Authors in the Schools

Sustainability: Each grade emphasizes a different aspect of sustainability

- Sorting food scraps, garbage and recyclables
- Composting and soil
- Recycling
- Energy conservation
- Environmental education

Camping Trips and Field Trips:

- Fall day trip and spring camping trip in K & 1st grades
- Twice yearly camping trips in 2nd - 5th grades
- Field trips to Cal Poly Humboldt or Arcata Playhouse performances
- Service project-Ivy pull at Sunny Brae Park
- Surfing with Center Activities - 4th grade
- Wolf Creek Science Camp - 5th grade
- Ashland Shakespeare Festival - 5th grade

Systems of Support:

- Small family atmosphere
- Buddy activities build skills in language arts, create a family-like atmosphere and foster positive self-esteem
- Mindfulness moments help students prepare for learning
- Clear expectations
- Problem solving with parents
- Restorative practices with students
- Second Step social-emotional curriculum
- Guidelines for behavior are in the handbook and posted on the website
- Positive behavior comes from Teamwork: students, staff, and parents
- Resource teacher and speech services
- Health and special education testing through HCOE
- Reading and math intervention/classroom aides for support
- Two parent teacher conferences each year. Parents receive an individualized report.
- All students in grades 3 – 5 take state tests.
- Overall, USC students tend to perform well on standardized tests.

Parent Opportunities:

- Volunteer in the classroom
- Parents drive on field trips
- Attend board meetings
- Fundraising - Donate to Equinox Center for Education
- Volunteer at family events
- Family events include the Family Fun night, Spring Sing, End of Year potluck and camping.

Parent Responsibilities:

- Attend parent conferences
- Bring and pick-up students on time
- Adhere to the policies of the school
- Read the school news, classroom news, and parent handbook (located on the web page with specific information about hours of operation, attendance, etc.)